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PASSION, MURDER
AND MYSTERY

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THE PENANCE OF BROTHER ALARIC
A MURDER OF SOME IMPORTANCE
UNSOLVED
GIGINS COURT
THE IMPERFECT CRIME

PASSION, MURDER AND MYSTERY

by
BRUCE GRAEME

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD - - - - -	xi
I. THE ROMANCE OF MERELLI - - - - -	15
II. THE BATTLE OF EXPERTS - - - - -	31
III. A CRIME OF INGRATITUDE - - - - -	47
IV. THE TRAGEDY OF GINETTE - - - - -	63
V. EYE OF THE MORNING - - - - -	77
VI. THE MURDER OF GOUFFÉ - - - - -	91
VII. THE MYSTERY OF POWDER B - - - - -	115
VIII. LA BELLE LISON - - - - -	139
IX. THE CASTLE ASSASSIN - - - - -	155
X. FOOD FOR MUSHROOMS - - - - -	171
XI. MOTHER OR DAUGHTER ? - - - - -	183
XII. A ROYAL INTRIGUE - - - - -	199
XIII. MURDER, ACCIDENT OR SUICIDE ? - - - - -	221
XIV. BEAUTY IN THE BOX - - - - -	245

FOREWORD

As revealed in his book, *Courts, Criminals and the Camorra*, (Chapman and Hall, 1912), Mr. Arthur Train was once asked by an editor to write an article on "Why do Men Kill?"

In order to answer this question Mr. Train secured particulars of a number of past murderers, not necessarily notorious, and dissecting from each one the motive, proceeded to enumerate the reason why men kill. The result was extraordinary. Out of a total of sixty-two killings, twenty were due to quarrels, thirteen to drink, nine to women, four to disputes over money, one to race antagonism, five to general causes, three to negligence, two infanticides, five during the commission of other crimes.

There is very little doubt that a like experiment conducted in the British Isles or in any other European country would achieve a very similar result, though to all appearances it does not seem as though this could be so, for surely nine people out of ten would say that seventy-five per cent of murders are committed, either directly or indirectly, because of women. So far as Britons are concerned names will quickly rise to their lips. Thomson and Bywaters, Armstrong, Crippen, Mahon, and many others, all of whom have been convicted during the last few years. True, in each case a woman has been the *raison d'être*; Bywaters killed Thomson to marry his wife; Armstrong presumably because of a nurse; Crippen to have Le Neve for his own; Mahon to hide the consequences of a liaison, and so on. Yet, in reality—as Mr. Train has proved—women are far from being at the root of the majority of murder mysteries; quarrelling and finance play a large part.

The truth is, of course, that as soon as a murder hints of the *crime passionnel* it becomes interesting to the general public, and achieves notoriety, whereas the more commonplace murder trials are sometimes neglected. Undoubtedly,

however, murders of the *crime passionnel* are quite as abounding with mystery and sensations as any other, perhaps a little more so, and in the cases into which romance creeps the sentimental public are ever ready to follow them.

Yet if England can produce a long list of *crimes passionnels* committed during the last few decades, so can France and the other Southern countries, where love and its attendant emotions of jealousy and hatred hold sway in the hearts of the hot-blooded Latins.

French murder trials are so rich in dramatic material, so full of successive mysteries, so teeming with sensations, that stories of fiction cannot compare in interest to them. What reputable authors would dare suggest the astounding coincidences which are revealed sometimes during a trial? What playwright would have the audacity to make his puppets act as do some murderers in real life?

What would the public say to a novelist who endeavoured to make them believe that a family could be so incredibly stupid and blind as were the Weber family in the case of Jeanne Weber; or that such incompetence and obstinacy on the part of successive doctors could really be true to life? What would readers say to a story of a tomb being *twice* violated? And yet this really occurred in Paris. For inexplicable mystery, sensation, and overpowering interest, nothing will ever compare to the notorious Steinheil case.

In nearly every one of the *affaires* related in this book, murder or murderers have been committed because a man's love for a woman, or a woman's adoration of a man, have made necessary the death of one who stood in the way, and where the passion of love rules the heart the death of a human person means nothing, even though, until just previously, he or she was the one beloved. The power of love, its capacity for good and evil, is astounding. It is paramount, supreme, and that is why the fourteen cases retold in this volume are but a small proportion of those which have still to be rewritten for the benefit of those of us who prefer fact to fiction and real life drama to the sometimes vaporous meanderings of the novelists.

THE ROMANCE OF MERELLI

Passion.

I.—THE ROMANCE OF MERELLI

JEAN GALLAY

VALENTINE DARBOUR, daughter of a painter of buildings, destined in later years to be a central figure in a *cause célèbre*, was born during the year 1877, in a house in Sedan called "Mon Idée." Of the part she was to take in the creation of a criminal there was no trace, as she was brought forth into the world amid the delightful old-world surroundings of Sedan.

Her childhood calls for no special mention ; it was merely that of one of a million other children, a happy, care-free period during which the brain was built up at school, the body in the pure open air. Consequently, like so many others brought up in similar circumstances, by the time she became of marriageable age, her soul was steeped in romance, while her sentiments were distinctly amorous, largely as a result of being born into the narrow life of a provincial town, reading many books which would have been better employed in commencing a conflagration, and a certain amount of solitude, which permitted her the opportunity of self-communing upon subjects which caused her blood to flow warmly and her eyes to shine.

Physically she was beautiful ; the oval of her olive face was framed in black bands of hair which she dressed in the style of Botticelli ; altogether she was pretty and exquisite.

There was no difficulty in securing a fiancé for her, and Valentine's father chose one, Camille Sohet, son of a local printer. Camille was romantic also ; it took but little time to elapse for the engaged couple to fall in love with each other, and as the days passed the romance strengthened as it should

do, the picturesque town making a perfect setting for their idyll.

There were many walks, and those were days when walks were appreciated. There was the *Digue* bordered by century-old oak trees, the *Fond des Buses*, shaded and bordered by sweet-smelling little gardens. Along these two roads in particular the two lovers were often to be seen, clasped tightly in each other's arms, often tasting of the same smooth sweet, or the same ripe cherry.

Before long they were married, and for a time heaven could not have been more happy or more desirable to them. Unfortunately, however lovable and adoring, Valentine proved far from being a practical housewife. She neglected washing-up to avoid spoiling her long, slender hands; as the crockery became used up it was necessary to purchase a fresh supply if they wished to eat from clean platters.

It is more than possible that Camille was beginning to wonder whether he had done so well as might be desired, but about this time Gaston Darbour took a hand in the game.

Gaston, likewise a dreamer, was Valentine's brother. Writing under a *nom de plume* he had been successful in having his writings published in several small periodicals. Inflamed by ambition he conceived the ever-alluring Paris to be his Mecca, and made up his mind to conquer the fair city. Not satisfied with inciting himself he propounded his scheme to Valentine and her husband, and beneath the heat of his enthusiasm their own inflammable composition caught fire, and so the three young people set forth for the capital.

It is easy to realize that the effect of this gay city upon the none too stable Valentine was not of the best. Before the newly arrived family had been in Paris very long, where they established themselves at 60, Boulevard de Clichy, Valentine had become stage-struck; day and night her thoughts were fixed upon the glittering theatres. Never one to resist her impulses, she commenced to besiege theatrical offices until eventually her sweet prettiness secured her a microscopic part in a Grand Guignol play entitled, "*Debut dans le monde*," in the Théâtre des Mathurins.

Whatever talent she might have possessed—and there is no reason to assume that it was in any way outstanding—Valentine soon perceived that her shapely legs and snowy

shoulders received more serious attention than her acting, so in due course she appeared as a nymph in the theatre, "Tour Eiffel," under the name of Andrée Florador.

From the "boards" to the *demi-monde* is not a far cry, even for a happily married woman, and Valentine, weak and vacillating, was no exception to the rule ; when there drifted into the tide of her life a rich Chilian, who fell in love with her and proceeded to assure her of his devotion, she could resist neither his tender pleading nor the influence of his bank balance.

Unversed in such delicate matters, the Chilian was unsportingly disinclined to share her even with her husband, and greedily suggested that she should go with him to his country. Nothing loth, Valentine consented, and together they sailed, leaving behind a husband with death in his heart. As Camille does not enter into this case again, it is interesting to record, at this point, that long after Valentine had left him Camille did indeed commit suicide—not, as the sentimentalists would probably prefer to have the story run, because of Valentine—but because of another woman.

To revert to Valentine. At this point of her life she became known as the Merelli, and the Merelli she was to remain until the end of her life. For a time all went well ; the Chilian enjoyed the privileges which his mistress had to offer, and in return supported her in a style which might have made even a queen envious.

The course of their love episode ran true to form ; the foundations of the Chilian's ardour were builded upon sand—sinking sand evidently—and there came a day when Merelli found herself abandoned. Heartbroken with all she had lost she returned to Paris and the stage. This was in the year 1905.

Not for long was she to lack a lover. Before she had quite realized that life was colder and less luxurious when the Chilian's arms were not wrapped passionately around her, she found a welcome and capable substitute in the Baron de Graval.

A pleasing fellow, this Baron, and handsome ; monocled and haughty, his eyes piercing and compelling, his all-conquering moustache waved and stiff, he caused more than a flutter in Merelli's heart. Their acquaintanceship ripened, the

Baron fell hopelessly in love with the girl, and undoubtedly his taste was not faulty. Since Sedan days her beauty had, if anything, increased: it was more mature, her figure was more rounded and graceful, her eyes were like grey velvet, her voice exquisitely musical.

One night his infatuation for her reached its zenith. They were dining together in a private room on the first floor of the "Filet du Sole", the famous restaurant of the Faubourg-Montmartre. It was a cheerful scene, one to tempt St. Anthony almost, though, heaven knows, the good man seemed temptation-proof! The patron, obeying the request of such an esteemed client, had excelled himself. The table was plentifully supplied with excellent dishes clustered round a handsome centre-piece in the shape of a huge wreath of crimson roses. Crystal gleamed and reflected the soft gleams of shaded lights; near by a magnum of champagne, collared by a spotless serviette, reposed in a pail of ice. By the side of the table stood a magnificent *maître d'hôtel* carefully transferring the golden-brown food from silver plate to delicate porcelain with the tenderness of a gourmet. Lucky Merelli! Looking round, faintly computing in her mind the expense of the dinner, she began to wonder if the Baron were indeed so much poorer than the now-forgotten Chilian.

During the course of the meal the Baron turned to her.

"This little snack, it pleases you, *mon adorée*?"

"My Baron! I am the most happy of women. I am so proud of you, of your great name, of your ancient title to which is attached so much glory and honour."

"You are pleased?"

"But yes, and yet—my love for you suggests one more wish."

"Your wishes are commands, my dear Valentine." He glanced lovingly at her out of his handsome eyes.

She sighed. "If we were but alone—just you and me—no other people to meet and disturb us——"

The Baron's eyes lit with an inward gleam of fire. Then he clasped her hand.

"Perhaps your wish will be granted, little one. I want you to be the most pampered, the most fêted woman in Paris. We will leave on a long journey—you and I——"

The subject dropped, not to be mentioned again for some

time, though every evening the Baron received his beautiful friend in the intimate and discreet surroundings of his sumptuous flat at 24, Rue François 1^{er}, where the cunning lighting, the gleam of precious silks, conspired to promote an ideal setting for love—in Valentine's mind much more so than the quiet be-treed streets of Sedan.

However, Valentine was to find that her words had lit a torch not to be extinguished for months to come, for one night, toward the middle of July, the Baron informed her that a magnificent surprise awaited her at the end of the month.

From that time until the evening of the 26th there was an uninterrupted procession of merchants to the Baron's flat, and in that time there accumulated in the salon, in the kitchen, in the corridor, even overflowing into the bathroom, trunks, cases and parcels of every conceivable shape and size until the apartment resembled a miniature warehouse.

On the morning of the 27th a closed motor-car drove up to the flat, collected the Baron and as much of the merchandise as it could carry, then drove to Le Havre, while meantime the rest of the baggage went by train, in which also went Merelli and her maid.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that all the cargo could not go by motor-car. For instance, one of the many trunks alone carried twenty-eight women's hats and thirty-seven evening dresses. Another tucked away forty different male garments, of which twenty-four were white waistcoats. Then there were also, for Merelli, fifty pairs of knickers—and in those days women wore knickers, and called them knickers—trimmed in all shades, twenty-two pairs of corsets; for the Baron, forty pairs of shoes.

There were drawings of the eighteenth century, a typewriter, complete equipment for a chauffeur, ten photographic apparatus, three lassos, three revolvers, three boxes of cartridges, two Winchesters, one hundred bottles of perfumed lotions, brilliantines and toilet lotions, five hundred francs' worth of grocery, tea, chocolate, wine, liqueurs and mineral waters. Altogether eighty-six bags, weighing in all about twenty thousand kilogrammes!

Reaching Le Havre they stopped in an hotel there, but obviously not even the most eccentric man buys twenty

thousand kilogrammes of assorted luggage to take to the coast for a few days' holiday, and on the 3rd August Merelli became cognizant, for the first time, of the wonderful surprise which Baron de Graval had prepared for her.

A motor fetched the two lovers from the hotel in the early hours of the morning, to drop them a few minutes later on the Quai du Commerce. When Valentine gazed round with wondering eyes, the Baron made a theatrical gesture, and, pointing beneath them, exclaimed :

"Beloved, here is a little toy I offer you !"

At first Merelli could not believe her eyes ; she gazed entranced at the vision at her feet, for there, riding on the softly heaving water, was a superb yacht, its whiteness shimmering, its polished brasswork sparkling in the first rays of the rising sun.

The yacht from which Merelli could not remove her gaze was the steam-yacht *Catarina*, the property of Messrs. Camples, of Southampton, a luxuriously equipped vessel containing three saloons, a smoking-room and eight state-rooms. The crew consisted of twenty men, all of them British, and commanded by Captain Cawes.

Even as the Baron spoke the Captain advanced toward them, cap in hand, and at a given signal the whole of the crew, twenty in number, clothed in white, drew up on either side of the deck. An hour later the *Catarina* lifted her anchor, and, gracefully dipping to the tiny wavelets, glided toward unknown isles, while the sun blazed down in full glory.

From Le Havre the *Catarina* sailed to Las Palmas, from there toward Maceio, in Brazil. During this time, except when the inclement weather had asserted itself, the company on board spent a deliriously happy holiday, for in addition to the Baron, Merelli, whom de Graval had introduced as "Madame la Baronne", and Captain Cawes, commander of the yacht, there was Marie Audot, Valentine's maid, whom "Madame" insisted should dine at table, and "Doctor" Kaplan, a medical student whom, for some unknown reason, the Baron had brought with him and introduced as "Doctor", "to take care of anyone who might fall ill".

Luxury, in fact, was the keynote of the yacht, for de Graval had spared no expense : before it had left England it had been fully provisioned by Messrs. Cooke and Son, of Gosport,

at the cost of £2,000. Another example of the life of ease led by the guests was that after each meal Moorish coffee was served, prepared by a Turkish servant who was clothed in a magnificent azure and gold costume, while the liquid was poured into transparent porcelain cups, each set in a stand of gold filigree. Afterward de Graval would hold a sing-song; Merelli would play the piano, he himself would sing rollicking songs with choruses in which the sailors, specially invited into the group, would join. Presently the sailors themselves would sing and dance, and in that happy fashion passed every evening—weather permitting. Needless to say, drink and cigars were distributed liberally, though whether it was de Graval's natural generosity or the mellowing influence of good wine which caused this it is impossible to state.

There was one cloud on Merelli's otherwise spotless horizon: the lack of news from France. Used to reading the newspapers whenever she wished, to her it was strange to pass day after day totally unaware of what might be happening at home. Still, though now and then she complained, it was not sufficient really to cause her to be any the less satisfied.

If de Graval's enjoyment were in any way marred he said nothing—though at times he frowned for no apparent reason. In all conscience he had reason: the cost of the voyage, excluding the crew's food, was in the neighbourhood of fifty-five thousand francs.

On 22nd August the *Catarina* sighted Maceio. The port being a difficult one to navigate, Captain Cawes was signalling for a pilot when the Baron stopped him.

"Please do not let us disembark here; there are lagoons, these are unhealthy. We will go on to Camomou."

In view of his employer's command the Captain headed the yacht for Camomou, a Brazilian port much smaller than Maceio, and arriving there the next day about four o'clock in the afternoon, they anchored.

Asked whether he were going ashore, de Graval hesitated for a long time, but in the end remained on the boat while Kaplan landed, to return at night, bringing with him a Brazilian newspaper, *Correio da Tarde*.

The Baron snatched it from him; then, having read it,

crushed the paper, threw it into the sea, and hurried below. "Doctor" Kaplan, not understanding his actions, remained a moment on deck, then went to his chemistry room. The poison cupboard was open ; de Graval seemed to be looking in it for something.

"Excuse me," said he, when questioned, "I have rather a wretched headache and hoped to find something for it here without having to trouble you."

Having been given a powder, he returned to deck and summoned the Captain :

"Commandant, which is our next port of call ?"

"We are making for Bahia, Monsieur le Baron."

"Can we avoid Bahia ?"

"Impossible ; we have no more coal."

"Ah ! Remember, then, that on board I do not retain my title, wishing to travel incognito. I am simply Jacques Grandet."

Left alone, he went to his own room and took a sheet of paper, on which he began to write :

To the Republicans of Bahia,

It is with a great feeling of confidence in your love of liberty and justice that I come to ask for your help and assistance.

You or your brothers have paid by their sufferings and their blood for the founding of your Republican State, you understand and feel, therefore, a man's true worth, no matter from where he comes, nor who he is.

He could not continue for the noise issuing from the saloon. The Baron opened the door. While la Merelli danced the cake-walk with the *maître d'hôtel*, Kaplan played the piano, assisted by the lady's maid banging on a bed-warmer in order to supply the effect of the big drum. He sighed and went to his cabin.

The following day, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the 24th August, they arrived at Bahia. Immediately the Captain of the port came on board, in full uniform and cocked hat, to make a visit of courtesy—yachts enjoying the same privileges as warships. Formality at an end, de Graval landed.

Scarcely had he put his foot on Brazilian soil than a fine-looking man took him by the arm.

“Gallay, I arrest you——”

It was Inspector Debishop, sent by M. Hamard, the Chief of the Parisian Sûreté.

Who, then, is Gallay? To answer this question it is necessary to indulge in retrospection, to return to Paris many months before the Baron de Graval was arrested on Brazilian soil.

Jean Gallay was originally a detective, a member of the Paris Sûreté, and as such was employed, in 1876, at one of the big railway termini. Later on he was mixed up in the Dreyfus case and was sent to Nice on a mission in connection with it.

Gallay was a clever man; he spoke German and English fluently and was an excellent writer; before he entered into sedentary occupation he wrote a book on motoring which sold moderately well.

In the days, however, during which he met Valentine Sohét, whose brother in the meantime had made a name as a clever artist, Jean Gallay was employed as cashier at the Comptoire d'Escompte, on the rue Bergère, working from eight-thirty in the morning until six-thirty at night for a salary of 250 francs a month. Like so many others, he was far from being contented with his lot in life. Envious of the nobility, their riches and their titles, there came a day when he could not resist the temptation to ape them, so at this stage can be seen Jean Gallay, bank clerk, preparing to lead a double life, just as did Robson, of the Crystal Palace Company, Redpath, of the Great Northern Railway Company, and T'Kint, of the Bank of Belgium; all of them counterparts of Jean Gallay.

Visualize the Jean Gallay of the morning; bespectacled, wearing an old, threadbare jacket, a frayed shirt, links at sixty-five centimes a pair, and a straw hat looking none too clean.

At six-thirty each evening Jean Gallay disappeared; in his place was substituted the Baron de Graval (sometimes he even elevated himself to a Dukedom—the Duc de Hert, he called himself), monocle replacing spectacles, dinner coat of the latest cut, laundered shirt, platinum links inlaid with brilliants, and a silk hat perched jauntily on his head.

There was no comparison between the two men ; to all intents and purposes they might have been two entirely different personalities, so successfully did the bank clerk blossom forth into the titled Baron ; so cleverly did he sink back again into the rôle of poorly-paid clerk the next morning.

He might have continued this life for years before being unmasked, even though he had come under the supervision of the authorities. Ever nervous of the espionage question, the Sûreté came to suspect the Duc de Hert, and he was trailed, but when the shadowers reported him as rather a rake and a man-about-town, but apparently quite innocent of any treachery, the police, all unsuspicious that Gallay had once been one of themselves, shut their eyes to his peccadilloes and his *amours*. Therefore, in the circumstances, there is every reason to believe that possibly his masquerade might never have been discovered—that is, as far as the public and his employers were concerned—but a fatal influence entered his life. He met Merelli, and as already described, fell an easy victim to her beauty, her amorous offerings.

She met him as the Baron de Graval ; he had to live up to the false pedestal upon which he had set himself. To impress Merelli he found he would have to spend money. Seeing that upon his meagre pittance of 250 francs a month it was impossible to do any of the things he longed to do, he turned at last to forgery, and his doom was sealed.

Being in charge of the transfer accounts, this was easy for him to manipulate. Having had printed specially for his purpose letter-headed paper of important clients of the bank, —Messieurs Gros-Roman, papermakers of the Vosges—after forging the necessary signatures, he addressed letters to the Banks as though from Messieurs Gros-Roman, giving instructions for sums, varying from two hundred and fifty francs to three hundred and fifty thousand francs, to be placed to the credit of Madame Merelli.

These letters went through the usual channels ; the bank executed the commands and advised their clients accordingly, but Gallay was in a position to suppress these letters so that during the three months he worked this scheme he was responsible for the sum of eight hundred and fifty thousand francs being unconsciously transferred from the account of

Messieurs Gros-Roman to that of Madame Merelli without any one of the partners becoming suspicious that things were not all they should be.

Thanks to this inexhaustible supply of money, Gallay was enabled to indulge in a long sea voyage in a magnificently equipped yacht, though when he first commenced to put this mad scheme into operation he must have known that sooner or later he would find himself in the dock, but his infatuation for Valentine was far stronger than his knowledge of all he was risking, so he went forward with it.

There may be another aspect which it is well not to overlook. In taking the yacht abroad on to the high seas he may have had the intention never to return to his native land, to steam about the world until his funds were exhausted, and then to settle down in a foreign land with his beloved mistress.

That there is an undercurrent of reason in this theory is proved by the fact that it was not his original intention to debark at Bahia. Merelli had, however, expressed a desire to see the port, and rather than refuse any wish or caprice on her part, he deliberately put his head into the noose, when it would have been perfectly simple for him to have continued the voyage as far as Mexico. Once there, France could not have insisted on his extradition.

Thus twice already had Merelli been responsible for his arrest, the first time indirectly by inciting him to commit a crime, the second time more directly by pleading that the *Catarina* should proceed to Bahia.

He had certainly anticipated being arrested at Bahia.

In the first case there is little doubt that when he was discovered in "Doctor" Kaplan's cabin he was looking for poison in order to commit suicide, and having failed he obviously searched in his mind for other ways of avoiding arrest, so that in the second case we find him commencing to formulate a proclamation in order to appear himself as a revolutionary and create a political aspect to the affair.

The magnetic attraction which Merelli undoubtedly possessed for him is again emphasized by the fact that while in the prison of Bahia he was allowed a certain amount of liberty, quite sufficient, in fact, to have enabled him to escape with ease, but for the third time Merelli held him back. He could

not bear the thought of leaving her behind, of losing her, and so he himself became lost, for in October he was back again in Paris under arrest for trial.

Here again, in the case of Jean Gallay, we get an insight into the curious sympathies of the French people toward bold criminals. Just as Gabrielle Bompard was cheered for her callous conduct in the murder of Gouffé, so now were Gallay and Merelli greeted with enthusiastic acclamation when the train carrying the two lovers steamed into the Saint Michael station.

Gallay walked up the stone stairway, dressed in white yachting clothes, and reciprocated by saluting; following him came la Merelli, neatly costumed in a black and grey pin-stripe material, her eyes scarcely to be glimpsed under the large hat.

“Long live Merelli!”

Bizarre scene! A defaulting bank clerk and his mistress being welcomed because their crime was that of a *grand passion*. The lines of agony twisting her mouth softened into a smile, which spread to her almond eyes. ‘The popularity which she had so vainly pursued was hers at last!’

Even Mary Audot, the maid, came in for a share of the ovation!

For Gallay the trial was the end. There was never any doubt as to the verdict. Seven years’ penal servitude! A long punishment for a few idyllic weeks on the Atlantic Ocean!

For Merelli it was the beginning! Over the back of Gallay she mounted to a pedestal; what histrionic ability she possessed she summoned to her aid. During the trial she enumerated her past lovers, among them a financier who arose each morning at seven o’clock to go into the Bois, and an Italian Prince who went to bed at the same time! Later she declared modestly that she was an expensive luxury, and did not hesitate to use the care-free, musical laugh which revealed her small, pearly teeth, regular and cruel.

What self-respecting jury could resist her wiles? They declared her acquitted, though in all fairness there was little else they could do. Obviously she was not guilty of any share in Gallay’s forgery other than expressing a wish that they might go away together, and were that a crime in the eyes of

the law there would be many more prisoners than the present number of prisons could hold !

While Gallay went down to the cells *en route* for seven years of soul-searing monotony and toil, Merelli left the courtroom laughing contentedly. Outside, bedecked in flowers, a waiting carriage took her to a flat in the rue Gustave-Flaubert, to where her admirers were already flocking. It was the triumph of Merelli !

Mr. William le Queux, in his book *Things I Know* (Eveleigh Nash and Grayson, 1923), mentions having met Gallay when he was masquerading under one of his titled *aliases*, and writes as follows :

“Another famous *escroc* I met was the Comte de Rebecque.

“While I lived at the Château des Grands-Vignes . . . my lifelong friend, Paul Deschanel, then President of the Chamber of Deputies, often motored out to me for a run in the glorious forest. I, in turn, often went to the artists’ colony at Barbizon, and there I first met the clever young artist named Gaston Deltour, who . . . afterwards designed several covers for my books. He introduced me to his very pretty sister Gabrielle, who had married a publicity expert named Sohet. They often visited me, and on Sunday Madame Sohet, who was about twenty-four and a typically smart Parisienne, was accompanied by a tall, refined, dark-haired man, named Comte de Rebecque. I rather liked him. As we took tea together in the garden on the border of the forest he told me that he had properties in Chile, but lived mostly in Paris. I quickly saw that he was a great admirer of my artist friend’s pretty sister.

“They stayed till evening, taking me in their car for a run round the Gorge aux Loups, and then returned to Paris.

“Two days later the pretty Gabrielle was missing from her home.”

THE BATTLE OF EXPERTS

Murder.

II.—THE BATTLE OF EXPERTS

JEANNE WEBER

THE case of Madame Jeanne Weber, the Ogress of the Goutte d'Or, is of interest for two distinct reasons : firstly, that it is a story of murder for the sake of murder only, as distinct from murder for gain, or any other ulterior motive ; and secondly, it is an example of incapability, not altogether unmixed with a spice of obstinacy, on the part of so-called medical experts, which became directly responsible for the loss of two young lives.

The first act of this drama took place in 1905, in the Goutte d'Or quarter of Paris, little changed from the time when Zola immortalized and used it as a vivid background for *Assommoir*, *Gervaise*, *Coupeau*, *Mes-Bottes* and *père Bazouge*. Though the new boulevards had penetrated near by, and the Nord railway had been extended to that district, there were still the same tenements, the same low houses, blackened by the smoke of factories and trains. The roads, comparatively isolated in the daytime, awoke to a bustle of movement only when the sirens of the adjacent workshops blared forth the signal for the cessation of work.

In those days work was still of paramount importance : evening distractions so necessary to post-war workers were confined solely to Saturday evenings. On these nights the families would flock to the café-concert of the Fauvette, or the Théâtre Montmartre, thus making the one break in the grey monotony of the week's work.

In the circumstances, therefore, it is not surprising that on other nights social intercourse between neighbours flourished more easily than now, family ties were considerably

stronger, and the milk of human kindness more full of the essential vitamins than the watered lactage of to-day.

Among the many families settled in the Goutte d'Or quarter was the Weber family—at the commencement of this story not inconsiderable in size. First and foremost, because she is the central character of this story, was Jeanne Weber—*née* Moulinet—who lived, together with her husband, a young wagoner, and Marcel, their young boy of seven years, at this Passage of the Goutte d'Or, which joins at right angles the rue Doudeauville to the rue Stéphenson.

In the rue Pré-Maudit was the habitation of Monsieur and Madame Pierre Weber, in the Impasse Langlois lived Monsieur and Madame Leon Weber, while finally, at Char-enton, resided Madame Charles Weber.

This, then, was the happy Weber family in February, 1905. Only Jeanne was miserable because, in the years which had passed, *le bon Dieu* had gathered into His fold two of her children, and she was still inconsolable for the loss of her youngest, which had died after living thirty months. Thus, when Madame Jeanne acted peculiarly, as she did sometimes, or when she was met, as she was occasionally, a litre of red wine under her arm, her step none too steady, there was no condemnation in the sorrowing glances bestowed upon her by her large-hearted neighbours, but rather sympathy and tenderness.

On the 2nd of March, Madame Pierre Weber, having to go to the public washing-place, asked Jeanne if she would look after her children, Suzanne and Georgette. Jeanne intimated her willingness, so Madame Pierre, with last instructions as to the treatment of Georgette's cough and the lingering traces of Suzanne's pneumonia, sturdily picked up her heavy bundle and departed for the Deux-Amis washing-place; in the words of Zola, celebrated for the correction of the great Virginie by Gervaise Macquart.

She had been there perhaps an hour or so when there arrived on the scene a woman gasping for breath, and crying in a sobbing voice for "Mâme Weber! Mâme Weber!"

Madame Pierre looked up startled. "Mademoiselle Pouche! What is the matter? Oh, *Mon Dieu!* tell me! Nothing is wrong?"

"You must return, Mâme Weber, Georgette is very ill.

I heard her cry as I passed. She was on the lap of your sister-in-law—choking. Quickly !”

Panic-stricken, Madame Weber sprang up from her labours and rushed home, there to find that Mademoiselle Pouche had not exaggerated. Her poor little girl was stretched out on the bed breathing with the utmost difficulty, her tongue hanging from her mouth in a lather of foam, her eyes glassy and protruding. By her side was her Aunt Jeanne, feeling the child’s chest beneath the clothes.

Madame Pierre took her child on her own knees, and with loving fingers tended Georgette, until gradually the breathing became more regular, the little eyes brighter. A few minutes later and Georgette was herself again, so Madame Pierre placed her tenderly back on the bed and prepared to return to her washing.

“She is better, Jeanne ; look after her well !”

With those parting words she went back to her work ; not, however, with an altogether easy heart. It was as if some instinct were warning her of impending evil, but “men must work”, and women too, and the washing had to be finished.

Her misgivings were not without foundation. Less than an hour later she was once again summoned home—too late. *Petite* Georgette was dead.

It was an unhappy evening for the prostrate parents : the father, hunched up by the cradle, could not keep his eyes from wandering back, again and again, to the little corpse. Madame Pierre lay on her bed, dry-eyed, weighed down with sorrow, while Mademoiselle Pouche sat silent, also glancing at the remains of what, but a few hours before, had been a happy, care-free child.

Probably because her eyes were less dimmed with sorrow, she was the first to notice queer marks on the child’s neck. She drew the father’s attention to them, and, startled, he promised to point them out to the state doctor.

At this late date it is difficult to decide whether Monsieur Pierre’s memory was less than might be desired, or whether the doctor was negligent in his duty, but wherever may lay the fault, the fact remains that Georgette was buried without further enquiries.

Nine days later Suzanne died—her face purple, her limbs

contracted, her teeth clenched, while the good Aunt Jeanne held the child's hand, for she had been left alone with the girl to tend her, while Monsieur and Madame Pierre earned their daily bread.

Once again Madame Pouche noticed suspicious marks. Under a scarf which someone—was it Jeanne?—tied round the child's neck was a long, black streak, about the width of a finger. This time the examining doctor was acquainted with the peculiar circumstances, and, in consequence, refused permission for the burial and called in the police.

Again the word negligence rears its ugly head—the police surgeon omitted to lift up the scarf, and Suzanne, too, was buried unavenged, only the pitiful mother and Mlle. Pouche suspicious that the two deaths were strange, to say the least of it.

Not yet, however, was the Grim Reaper satisfied with his toll of death from the Weber family. With startling suddenness he invaded the home of Monsieur Léon Weber, two weeks later, on 25th March entering the door at the same time as Jeanne, who had invited herself to lunch.

Jeanne and Mme Léon had not seen much of each other in the past, but this fact did not debar Mme. Léon from making use of Jeanne's services. There was shopping to be done, and seven-months-old Germaine to be guarded. Jeanne's presence was a happy chance; Mme. Léon departed, and was gone twenty-nine minutes.

In the meantime her mother, living in the flat above, heard the sound of piercing cries from her daughter's *appartement*. She rushed down, to find her tiny granddaughter struggling for breath, her eyes bulging.

Ignoring Jeanne, she picked up Germaine and took her upstairs with her, there keeping her until 12.30 p.m. By that time the baby was easier, and Mme. Léon had returned. Jeanne, be it noted, still remained.

After lunch Jeanne remembered that she must take back cheese with her, but coincident with this recollection she was conscious that her legs pained her terribly. She begged Mme. Léon to fetch some for her. Mme. Léon did so, but Jeanne had discovered a second errand, so the hostess cheerfully agreed to go out again. On her return home she saw, with horror, little Germaine stretched stiffly on her bed, suffocating and purple.

She shrieked with terror ; almost at once the room was invaded by neighbours. Alarmed, they pressed close to the bed ; then one of them saw Jeanne's hand pressing on the child's chest, preventing the wee mite from breathing. She roughly ordered Jeanne to take away her hand, but Jeanne shook her head and told Mme Léon to send someone for a doctor.

In answer to the summons Doctor Labelle arrived, and clearing the room of the anxious women neighbours, proceeded to examine Germaine. In doing so his forehead puckered into puzzled lines, for the unexpected illness was strange. Obviously the child had not suffered convulsions, though in some ways she had that appearance. More strange, too, were the marks of blood above the ear, just beneath the skin. However, he prescribed a draught and promised to return the next day.

The following morning he arrived to find the child quite well, and promptly judged the whole affair a false alarm, a temporary upset such as children sometimes suffer. He told the mother so and left for his next patient.

Soon afterward arrived Jeanne, tenderly solicitous for Germaine ; at the news of the baby's recovery she sank into a chair with relief, and passed the next hour or so chattering to her sister-in-law.

Later, however, she complained of hunger, and exercising an unaccountable influence, persuaded Mme. Léon yet again to execute an errand for her.

Mme. Léon must have been an extraordinarily complacent woman ; had she been less so her child would probably have lived. As it was, she went to fetch her sister-in-law—of whom, until now, she had seen very little—a meal, thereby sealing Germaine's fate, for when she returned it was to find the baby convulsed, half-buried underneath the bedclothes, and Jeanne standing over holding the child's chest.

Only with difficulty did Mme. Léon and a neighbour remove Jeanne, but having pushed her aside, they commenced to rub the little body. Seeing some hopes of success they then departed for salts and vinegar—leaving Jeanne alone with the baby. This inconceivable stupidity, their gross obtuseness, could end only one way. By the time they returned, ten minutes later, the child was dead.

If this were the end of the already long toll of lives it would be a good opportunity to pause for reflection, but this female devil, this vile murderess, was not yet satisfied, her blood-thirst was not yet sated, for the same night, scarcely twelve hours after poor little Germaine was buried, Marcel, Jeanne's own son, died of suffocation. In less than one month, therefore, there had been four deaths in one family.

Blind Justice! Indeed, Justice must have been blind; not even with Marcel's death did she open her eyes to see that her scales were more equally adjusted. In fact, this latest death had a vastly different effect to what one might conceive. Jeanne's obvious sorrow endeared her to her relations so that, putting aside their own grief, they rallied round her and exerted themselves in a tireless endeavour to substitute affection for affliction; blind, apparently, like Justice, to intuition, suspicion. In fact, they went even further. Jeanne whispered to them that there was talk of the Commissionaire of Police exhuming the bodies of the four children, asked for protection, and the relations sympathized, promising to assist her.

On the 5th of April Mme. Charles Weber, who it will be remembered lived at Charenton, came, together with her Maurice, a fat, rosy babe of ten months, and Mme. Pierre Weber, to lunch with Jeanne.

It was a quiet meal. Were not two of the three mothers suffering from all too recent bereavements? It was a council of comfort, of mutual sympathy.

Afterwards, when the meal was over, Jeanne discovered that she required needles. Her legs pained her—the same old excuse—she could not go out, so she persuaded Mme. Charles to go for them. Mme. Charles out of the way, Jeanne needed wine. Mme. Pierre—she would fetch it, and—impossible to realize—Mme. Pierre, not in any way profiting by the tragedy of her sister-in-law, Mme. Léon, went.

It is not necessary to recapitulate the events which followed; the story has already been told so often. This time, however, Mme. Pierre awoke to a sense of the truth, just as did Mme. Charles, who entered immediately afterward.

"Miserable woman," cried the unhappy mother to Jeanne, "he, too, is going to die before you, *like the others*."

Without wasting time she ran to fetch a doctor, and returned

shortly with Dr. Mack. He carefully examined the child and discovered underneath a scarf which Jeanne had wound round the baby's neck, a large, blackish scar, and without an instant's hesitation had the body conveyed to the children's hospital at Bretonneau.

Dr. Mack must thus be described as either the first conscientious doctor who had so far been connected with Jeanne's victims, or—in words a trifle less condemnatory—the first doctor who was not incompetent. There can be scarcely any other alternative ; sad though it may seem that such a state of affairs could exist in a civilized city like Paris, yet one cannot help feeling that negligence and incompetence have so far played a large part in this case.

However, Dr. Mack's promptitude was to bear fruit. Under the charge of Dr. Sevestre, *petit* Maurice was examined by the house-surgeon, M. Saillant, who reported a longitudinal red mark, accentuated on the sides of the neck and broken in front. The following morning a police surgeon reported in his turn : a bruise on the back part of the neck, seemingly the result of pressure. On the strength of these two examinations, M. Monentheuil, Commissionaire of Police of the Goutte d'Or district, had Jeanne Weber arrested.

The news circulated like wildfire, tongues became unlocked, and public rumour recalled that in the past Lucie Alexandre, two years old, and Marcelle Poyatos, twenty months of age, had both died in Jeanne Weber's arms—purple and suffocating like the others.

M. Leydet was appointed *juge d'instruction*. Losing no time, he ordered the examination of Maurice Weber by Professor Thoinot, *agrégé de médecine légale à la Faculté de Paris*, and without delay Professor Thoinot examined Maurice, and thus began the first skirmish in the battle of experts.

M. Thoinot found that Maurice had been in general good health. There was evidence of remarkable vitality, traces of a slight cough and bronchitis. Otherwise nothing, for by that time the signs of strangulation had disappeared. Heedless of the remarks of Doctors Sevestre and Saillant, he diagnosed temporary congestion of the air tube, due to bronchitis. In other words, death from natural causes !

Next he performed an autopsy on the three little cousins. In the lungs of Georgette he discovered a swollen abscess,

traces of bacilli of Koch. Dissection of Suzanne's neck revealed the penetration of a bruise, clearly the result of a mark produced during life. The professor hesitated to diagnose the actual cause of death, but definitely negatived any suggestion of murder.

It is not easy to understand the dogmatic attitude of Professor Thoinot. French writers, commenting on this case, have not hesitated to accuse him of incapacity, and while pausing to jump to such an arbitrary conclusion, it is difficult to comprehend the reasons which satisfied him in disdaining the unprejudiced findings of Doctors Saillant and Sevestre, and the evidence of Mlle. Pouche. Moreover, what of the bruises on Maurice's body. Surely he could not have imagined that the two worthy doctors had been mentally influenced by a grief-stricken mother, yet if one is to credit the writings of M. Désiré Méreaux in the *Archives d'Anthropologie Criminelle*, Professor Thoinot said that the bruises had never existed.

However, a further consultation took place between Doctors Thoinot, Brouardel and Descouts to deliberate whether indeed the three little ones had died from the result of pressure on the throat, with the result that these three medical luminaries concluded that : "The facts furnished by the autopsy and witnesses do not prove death as the result of criminal violence."

Science, therefore, as represented by the three doctors mentioned above, proved that no crime had been committed. Public opinion, shocked by the tragic deaths, the tender age of the victims, was not satisfied, and a clamour arose, calling for the head of Jeanne Weber.

The public judged her a murderess. Jeanne's relations, even, could not doubt otherwise, though still, tied by the admirable clan spirit possessed by the French people, they endeavoured to create every possible explanation, if not excuse, of Jeanne's death-dealing propensities. She was mad, they said—a drunkard also ! Her mind was unhinged by the death of her two daughters, and more lately her son—she could not bear to see maternal joy round her ! The murders—if, indeed, they were murders—were committed under the influence of drink, and hatred of children not her own !

Admirable sentiments, no doubt, but what of Marcel, Jeanne's own son. Did she hate Marcel because he was a son and not a daughter? The pleas of Jeanne's relations are pathetic, and, considering the trail of tragedies the murderess had left behind her, rather exaggerated.

The police authorities—one would suspect that they, too, were not entirely satisfied with the conclusion of science—questioning the sanity of Jeanne Weber, ordered her examination by Doctors Wallon and Dupré, brain specialists. They reported as follows :

“The attitude and language of this woman are calm and lucid. She has certainly suffered these latter months from nervous disorders, hysteria, evidenced by loss of consciousness, followed by spontaneous recoveries, accompanied with giddiness. These phenomena appeared as a result of mental disorders caused by the loss of her two children and gynecological disorders.”

In other words, Jeanne's physical activity was great, her judgment sound, logical and lucid—she was not mad. Yet there was a further consultation a little before the trial, that of Doctors Joffroy, Dubuisson and Segalas, whose findings were that Jeanne was a good wife and mother, careful for and affectionate of her own family. They pointed out also that—according to Jeanne—there existed in the bereaved families drunkenness for two generations past, a malady which repeated itself in the three children in a weak constitution and frequent convulsions at an early age.

It would almost seem that the accused had become the accuser.

On the 29th of January, 1906, nine months after the woman was first sent to prison, the trial of Jeanne Weber, before the assizes of the Seine, took place, the accused being defended by the celebrated Maître Henri-Robert, mentioned elsewhere in this book.

The course of justice did not run smoothly. The witnesses frequently contradicted themselves; the heavy weight of science as represented by the sound report of Thoinot and Brouardel, supported by the evidence of other medical witnesses—in all, eighteen doctors were placed in the witness-box—was thrown down on behalf of the accused.

For two days the trial continued, while Jeanne Weber, described by the Paris correspondents of the London newspapers as a pale-faced, fragile, little woman, listened to the circumstantial evidence, knowing that her life or liberty depended upon the manner with which it was accepted by the Court. She was upbraided by the parents of the dead children ; her husband, in tears, answered that while he could not find it in his heart to believe her guilty of the awful crime of which she was accused, he could not see how the children died unless at her hands ; the children's grandmother did not hesitate to denounce her.

To all these accusations she said naught, but repeated monotonously, in a dull, dead voice : "I did not kill them. Why should I have killed them ?"

The testimony of the eighteen doctors to the effect that there was nothing to show that a crime had been committed had great weight with the judge. Late in the afternoon of the second day of the trial, Advocat-General Seligman, applauded by Maître Henri-Robert, asked for an acquittal of the accused.

"Luckily for the woman," he said in the course of his speech, "we are in the twentieth century. Had she lived four hundred years ago, she would have been condemned of sorcery and butchered."

In the light of after events it would have been better had the Court of Justice been a little less civilized. Meanwhile the jury unanimously brought in Jeanne Moulinet, wife of Weber, born in Kéritry (Cotes du Nord) on 7th October, 1847, not guilty.

When the verdict was given, Mme. Weber broke down and sobbed. Presently, with a theatrical gesture, she caught hold of the hands of Maître Henri-Robert and kissed them, in a cracked voice she called out to her husband in the body of the court : "I did not kill them ! Say you believe me now !"

His reply was not heard, but everybody saw him climb over the benches, heedless of court and jury, and clasp his wife in his arms. The excitement of the audience was intense. The dense crowd broke into prolonged applause and endeavoured to carry her out of court, and probably would have done so but for the intervention of the warders.

There is now a passage of time until one cold, rainy evening of April, 1907, when a young doctor, Papazoglou, recently settled in the town of Villedieu, was summoned to the bedside of Auguste Bavouzet, of Chambon. Before obeying the call, brought to him by Auguste's sister Louise, the doctor made enquiries as to the symptoms, and hearing that Auguste had returned from a wedding where he had eaten and drunk too much, reached the conclusion that Auguste was merely suffering from indigestion, and wrote out a prescription, ordering him, in addition, mustard emetics, and, satisfied that he had done all he need do, sent Louise back by herself.

Early the next morning, Thursday, 7th April, came M. Bavouzet himself, alarmed by his son's continued illness. This time Papazoglou decided to attend personally, jumped into his car and drove to Chambon, scarcely two kilometres away, but when he arrived, barely twenty minutes from the time his father had left him, Auguste was a little corpse, rigid and cooling.

By the side of the bed was a woman who reproached the doctor for having been so long arriving.

Without replying, Doctor Papazoglou examined the child.

"He is already washed and changed?"

"Yes, his nightgown was disgusting; he had been sick all over it."

"Oh, ho! What is this?"

Around the neck a large, black mark showed up on the white skin.

"Good gracious, yes," placidly replied the woman.

"But in truth! Madame, who are you?"

"Madame Blaise, at your service, sir, own sister to the poor wife of Bavouzet."

"I will come back to-morrow in order to see the corpse, and to give permission for burial. Mind you keep that night-dress."

The following day the doctor saw that the body was purple, and the black mark on the neck clearer than ever. He considered it only right to report the matter to the parquet of Chateauroux, who requested Doctor Audiat to make all necessary investigations. The *medicin legiste* noticed the bruise, the black marks on the forehead, the purple marks on the

thighs and stomach. Was it poison, strangulation, or meningitis pure and simple?

Apparently his state of indecision lasted until the 22nd of April, when, by a fortunate coincidence, which seemed to hint that at last justice was awakening to a sense of her responsibilities, Germaine Bavouzet, elder sister of the dead child, came across a sheet of the *Petit Journal*, two years old, in which was mentioned the Ogress of the Goutte d'Or.

Suddenly enlightened as to the identity of Madame Blaise, the child immediately ran to the police-station and communicated her suspicions to the authorities, who took the matter up, and soon proved that Madame Blaise was, in reality, Jeanne Weber.

The coincidence of her appearance and the subsequent death was too glaring to be overlooked, yet M. Belleau, the appointed *juge d'instruction*, remained sceptical that Jeanne Weber was responsible for the death of Auguste Bavouzet. Unfortunately, the autopsy of the victims, performed by Doctors Bruneau and Audiat, revealed the existence of certain violence without proving conclusively that the child's death was a direct consequence.

Before acting on his own initiative, M. Belleau decided to have a consultation with an expert, and by a strange coincidence he called in Professor Thoinot. As before, Dr. Thoinot decided against the accusation, even though it was so moderate and almost doubtful.

A further autopsy was held, this time by two groups of experts, Doctors Thoinot, Socquet, Dervieux and Paul of Paris, and Doctors Audiat, Bruneau and Papazoglou, of Chateauroux. The result was absolute disagreement.

The Parisian experts diagnosed death as being due to virulent typhoid, and they did not attempt to disguise their contempt for the opinion of the three other men—"second-rate doctors"—who, after the second autopsy, were convinced that death was the result of crime; though whether the opinion was the result of research, or whether pure obstinacy, encouraged by the spirit of contradiction, is open to doubt. Whatever the cause, however, they were just as solidly in favour of murder as the Paris section, upholding their professional reputation, and that of their distinguished confrère Thoinot, were of the opposite.

The conclusions reached were obviously of no use to the *juge d'instruction*, who naturally had to have something definite one way or the other upon which to work, so on the 1st of November he called in Doctors Lande of Bordeaux, Mariet of Montpellier, and Brissaud of Paris, to assist in settling the argument.

The Paris experts won; the final arbitors conformed with the Thoinot theory. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that when M. Henri-Robert, once more engaged for the defence of Jeanne Weber, proclaimed a judicial error, he won his plea, and Jeanne Weber again went free.

Upon Jeanne's release, M. Bonjean, a well-known philanthropist, his heart touched by her trials and tribulations, took pity upon her and took her into his haven at Fongombault. Feeling that the poor woman could best be consoled for the loss of her own little ones by being surrounded by others, he had her placed in an infirmary to look after poor children.

He might as well have taken in a nose-horned viper. Fifteen days after her arrival she was found in the infirmary with her hands round the neck of a child suffering from small-pox.

There was no scandal, everything was kept quiet, but there was no time wasted in turning her out, and so Jeanne Weber took to the open road, in the end reaching Paris.

Here, wretched and miserable, she went to the Sûreté, threw herself at the feet of the chief, M. Hamard, and confessing the murder of the little Webers, begged to be arrested.

Cunningly, M. Hamard interpolated a question.

"But the little Bavouzet?"

She shook her head. "No, no! Only the Webers."

But M. Hamard was powerless. Sentence had been pronounced in the case of the Webers. Jeanne had been declared innocent, and innocent she would have to remain.

Once again the open road until she reached Saint-Remy. Here she found a handsome worker in a cement factory, one Emile Banchery, to take pity upon her, and together the couple departed for Sorcy. They arrived at Commercy, where they stopped at an estaminet for the night, Banchery booking two separate rooms.

When it was time for Jeanne to go to bed she commenced to weep. "My husband is jealous," she sobbed. "If I had a child with me he would be reassured."

The kindly landlady sympathized with her. "Take Marcel with you," she said, and pushed her little boy forward, and hand in hand Jeanne and Marcel departed upstairs.

During the night her neighbour, Mme. Curlet, awoke to hear suspicious noises, and, alarmed, she hastened into Jeanne's bedroom. In the bed lay Jeanne's last victim, covered in blood. Knotted handkerchiefs were hidden under the bolster. This time the murderess was caught in *flagrante delicto*.

The autopsy on Marcel Poirot could, this time, bear only one result: murder by strangulation. Jeanne was proved guilty at last.

Yet still, happen what might, she was to escape the justice of man. Examined by Professors Paris and Lalanne, she was found mad and transferred to an asylum at Maréville.

Here, as time passed, she sank gradually into a kind of dull stupidity, and later anguish. Her hands formed the habit of clawing the air, grasping invisible necks, until one day she died, her mouth salivary, her eyes haggard, the nails of her hands clutching her neck, and so passed away the Ogress of the Goutte d'Or.

Considering the case in all its different aspects it becomes, to adapt Shakespeare, "a tragedy of errors". From first to last it is a story of indifference, of crass blindness to facts, and human fallibility. For instance, to take the first death, that of Georgette Weber; surely the parents were guilty of indifference in not reporting the mark apparent on Georgette's neck, which the keen eyes of Mme. Pouche had pointed out to them, or if they did so, then the onus of responsibility is transferred to the doctor, who is, in that case, guilty of criminal negligence. Only supposing that Jeanne's guilt of Georgette's death could have been established at that time, the lives of six young children would have been saved.

However, granted the strength of human trust was such that after the death of Georgette Jeanne remained unsuspected, what of the subsequent death of Suzanne? Two sisters dying in—to say the very least of it—curious circumstances, their bodies purple, their limbs contracted, both after having been left alone with their aunt—an accepted drinker—both bearing suspicious marks on their bodies—even Pickwick would have been struck by the coincidence.

We know that the first doctor who examined Suzanne was not entirely easy, yet the police doctor did not even look under the scarf. Indifference, incompetence, negligence—which word ought to be used?

Of all the careless people connected with Jeanne, Mme. Léon Weber appears to be the worst. Before even the people had finished gossiping about the deaths of Georgette and Suzanne, and glancing curiously at Jeanne, Mme Léon entrusted her child Germaine to Jeanne's care. She returned, as already described, to find her in the hands of her grandmother who had rescued her from Jeanne. Yet, despite this warning, she left it for a second and third time with the aunt, until eventually Jeanne succeeded in her vile deed. Even then when it seemed that Mme. Léon must positively have had some suspicion as to Jeanne's guilt—did she not help to drag Jeanne away from her victim?—Mme. Léon left Germaine alone for the fourth time, so that Mme. Lerigoleur and she might run *separately* for salts and vinegar. Surely one could have fetched both salts and vinegar while the other stayed behind to look after the child, to protect it, in fact, from Jeanne's assaults.

Yet, to a certain extent, excuses can be made for the Weber family. It is, after all, a difficult thing to suspect one's relations of such horrible murders, but this apology cannot apply to the three experts. If Doctors Sevestre and Saillant could suspect a crime, why not the three specialists?

Thus not only once but twice did expert opinion secure an acquittal for Jeanne when every other possible circumstance pointed to her guilt.

Thus while expert disagreed with expert the guilty escaped punishment, and Auguste Bavouzet and Marcel Poirot died in consequence.

There remains, in conclusion, one question which, unfortunately, will never have an answer. That Jeanne Weber died insane is indeed proved, but was she insane when she murdered her small relations? Surely yes. Such motiveless murders could not have been committed by other than an insane person, but—as her relations pleaded—was that insanity caused by the loss of her own two daughters, or was she insane even before that date, and did they, also, die by the hand of their mother?

A CRIME OF INGRATITUDE

Passion and Murder.

III.—A CRIME OF INGRATITUDE

ANASTAY

LOUIS ANASTAY was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he was born under a lucky star, and if only he had possessed some streak in his character which could have resisted his passion for the fairer sex, he might easily have risen to such a position in life that he could have laughed to scorn any idea of the spoon for the star which meant as much—perhaps a little more.

He was the son of a quack doctor, a man of little account and of no social standing, moreover one who, later on, was to be condemned to prison and fined for illegally practising medicine.

One day, when quite a little child, he went to visit a friend of his, of the same age, a child of Mme. Caboret, a domestic in the service of the Baroness Dellard. The two children were playing together in the kitchen when Madame Dellard encountered them.

She glanced fleetingly at the visitor, the next second her glance became more fixed, and a strange sympathy was created in her large heart for little Louis. She picked him up in her arms, his baby eyes looked into hers and he smiled. Madame was charmed, conquered. She drew the child toward her and kissed him tenderly.

Thereafter her interest in him increased, until she looked upon him almost as a son of her own, though she already had one, a feeling which intensified immediately she learned that Louis had lost his own *maman* when quite a tiny tot.

When Louis was old enough, she superintended his education and arranged for him to follow the course of study

offered at the famous military school of St. Cyr, and while he gradually passed from stage to stage in his studies, the boy grew to be a man, and the hair of his benefactor turned snow-white with age.

This, then, was the history of Anastay up to the 9th of October, 1889. On that night Madame Dellard gave a dinner in her old-fashioned *appartement* in honour of her protégé, who, eight days previously, had satisfied the examiner of St. Cyr as to his competency, and in consequence was nominated to a sub-lieutenancy of the 15th Infantry Regiment.

It must have been an arresting scene, almost a glimpse into the days of the Empire, for in Madame's *appartement* little had changed since the days, nearly half a century ago, when Madame Dellard had been wedded. In her rooms was still the same furniture of rigid mahogany, the same armchairs of the "Victoire" style, with their elbow rests, and legs of bronze. Here and there were lightly-built brackets and pier tables jealously supporting dainty bric-à-brac and antiques; the hangings and curtains were of a gorgeous rich green plush.

If the style was of a past decade, at least it was harmonious and warm—a gallant and successful defence against the inexorable passage of time with its change of customs; and the quaint old-world *appartement* radiated a sense of contentment, and suggested to the sympathetic a memory of a glorious epoch.

Amid these surroundings the dinner proceeded smoothly, and Louis Anastay must have felt well pleased with his lot in life. He was a handsome man, if he were yet entitled to that appellation, one to whom the other sex might so easily lose their hearts. Thin and slender, he stood and sat with a straight and pleasing rigidity—the result of his training. His face was flushed with health, his skin enviously clean. If his profile were a trifle feminine, this effect was counteracted by his soft brown moustache. Meanwhile he smiled happily and talked gaily with his mentor, and was the cynosure of all feminine eyes, for Madame Dellard had seen that there were several young ladies present, among whom he might so easily find one to share his more or less assured future.

Many had been the questioning glances exchanged at table between the young folk—those of the ladies, shy but questioning, his, careless, a trifle supercilious. He was young, just free

to sow his wild oats, and marriage bonds were as yet far from being acceptable.

Dinner over, the company ceremoniously moved into another room where they cheerfully grouped themselves around their hostess.

"M. Anastay will sing us something," said one of her friends. "Will you not, my lieutenant?"

Proud of his voice, Louis needed little persuasion to reveal his accomplishments to the admiring guests, so with a pleasing style he sang the "*Petit bleu*", which during the previous summer Paulas had made popular at the Alcazar. This he followed with an air from *Madame l'Archiduc*, and other popular songs, many of which were being sung in the smaller cafés.

His choice was not of the best, and somehow his songs must have contrasted strangely with the dignified atmosphere of the old-world *appartement*, but after all he was young and warm-blooded, flushed with success, admiration and wine, so that no one saw fit to remonstrate.

The evening passed happily until at last the guests were gone.

"And now," said the Baroness, drawing him toward her and imprinting a gentle kiss upon his forehead, "now we must find a good and honest woman for this great, big boy. Ah! my dear little one, how happy I shall be to see you married. Then only shall I consider my mission toward you finished, then only shall I die in peace."

The next day Louis Anastay took the train for Lyon to rejoin his regiment. His benefactress gave him a parting present of 100 francs. With that, good looks, and an elegant uniform, one was rich—in 1889.

Blood will tell! If ever there were proof of this, Louis Anastay can rightly be considered as a most convincing example. It has already been seen that his prospects were unbounded. Taken, literally, from the kitchen when quite young, he had lived the subsequent years of his life until he was twenty-one in genteel surroundings, in the company of gentlemen.

Despite his lowly birth he had as his benefactress a lady of title, breeding and influence, one whose son, Baron Dellard, was Chief of the Department of the Ministry of War.

With the Baroness to arrange the marriage of her protégé he might have married extraordinarily well ; probably the Baron Dellard would have seen that Anastay was not overlooked in the race for promotion.

Yet blood will tell ! Hardly had he settled down to regular Army life than this young man gave himself over to the lowest debauches. With his distinguished upbringing, his gracious and easy-going manners, his soft and often cajoling voice, his delicate mouth so nicely formed, he was more than pleasing to women. This he realized and made the most of it. Unfortunately, neither respect for his uniform, nor the exact idea of what he could afford, stopped him on the brink of still worse imprudence. From Modane, where his regiment went for a few days' manœuvres, he brought back to Lyon two sisters, but before long he abandoned them.

Next he commenced a liaison with a young girl, Valerie Rey, whose mother directed a matrimonial agency. To her he promised marriage although he knew quite well that she would not be able to provide the *dot* required by persons of his rank. After this he took to gambling, risking all and more than his pay on the tables.

Before long he was perpetually in a state of dissipation when off duty, and it was about this time when, one night, he visited the Bellecour Theatre at Lyon.

It was a fatal night's amusement if he had but known it, and directly responsible for the dreadful happenings which were to follow not long after. At the same time, however, it is a moot point as to whether the *grande passion* which filled his heart that night would not have happened eventually, for when flotsam once floats with the tide it does not turn back.

However, whether or no time might have proved a sedative to his youthful escapades, the fact remains that he saw on the boards of the Bellecour Theatre that night a Spanish danseuse, Madeleine Gonzalez, and the sight of her so inflamed his heart that he fell violently in love with her.

Certainly there was an excuse for his sudden emotions. She was then only eighteen years of age and extremely beautiful, while her dark eyes hid in their dusk all the ardour and romance bred of the hot sun and the red wine of Spain.

While she gaily danced, bathed in the far from brilliant but distinctly more flattering illumination from the footlights

of those days, he could not detach his gaze from her, and when she finished, instead of joining in with the rest of the audience in hearty applause, he sat still, in a sense paralysed by the throbbing of his heart. Afterward he felt numb, then hot with a longing for her, with a passionate desire to hold her in his arms, to sweep her off her feet.

It was not to be expected that he would remain content to worship from a distance. After a sleepless night he took the first opportunity the next day to call at her *appartement*, where he left a card and a basket of flowers which cost him the whole of his month's pay. Later on in the evening Madeleine, doubtless charmed by his offering, received him, and must have found him just as agreeable to her eyes as she was to his, for with little hesitation she gave him permission to return—at a later hour!

After that their romance proceeded apace, and when Anastay returned to Lyon after a period of instruction at the Valbonne shooting school, the little ballerina deserted her mother and went to live with Anastay as his mistress.

This last move was a fatal step. Anastay could never have hoped to have supported a mistress even moderately well, but he did not stop to consider the question of finance, and disdaining the more humble restaurants, he appeared with her again and again at the gorgeously decorated and beflowered Restaurant des Quais, while at other times he lavished money and expensive presents upon her.

To do this he borrowed more, and still more money. Afterward he helped himself to money belonging to others, and with it played at the tables at Charbonnières, hoping to gain the wherewithal to keep his lady-love.

Nor was this the only false step he made. From the beginning of his infatuation for the dainty Gonzalez his regimental work suffered, until it was skimped and neglected from every point of view.

Obviously there could be only one end to this sort of life; in due course he came to the end of the patience of even the most indulgent of his comrades, and they decided to put the "little beast" or the "little idiot", as they called him, in "Coventry". This happened just at the time when the mother of Madeleine Gonzalez appealed to the Colonel of the regiment for the custody of her child.

Needless to say this action on the part of Señora Gonzalez wrote the word "Finis" to Anastay's army career, and toward the end of that year, in the month of November, Anastay was dismissed from his regiment.

On the 2nd of December, 1891, the ex-sub-lieutenant journeyed back to Paris. What were his thoughts during that time when the train drew nearer to the Metropolis each passing second? Did he look back upon his stupidity of the past year and regret the end of all his hopes and aspirations—if he had had any? On the other hand, did he dispose of all regrets as to his career by a mere shrug of his shoulders, and instead chide himself more heartily on the fact that he had lost Madeleine—at any rate for the time being?

Considering the depth of his passion for the little dancing girl it would not be difficult, in lieu of definite proof to the contrary, to assert that his thoughts revolved round his mistress, but one fact is certain—that during the journey from Lyon to Paris he had his mind fixed on murder.

Cold, callous murder was his objective in Paris. The identity of his victim was of little account so long as he obtained money—money to spend, money to give Madeleine to bring her to him in Paris.

The train steamed into the Gare de Lyon too late for him to put his plans into operation that night, so he went along the rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires until he arrived at the Hotel du Midi et du Nord, at which he stopped for the night.

The next morning he dressed himself in civil clothes, and strolled into the crowded streets. Stopping at a near-by shop he bought himself a new hat, but in doing so, his small stock of money obtained from the sale of his mistress's jewels was reduced to a perilously low level. However, anticipating that before long he would soon possess more, he continued on his way until he arrived at 57, Boulevard Beaumarchais, chez Mme. Labbé des Londes. Madame, whose husband had died five years ago, had in the past been very good to him, especially when he had entered the school of St. Cyr, both for the sake of the boy, whose personality had captured her sympathy just as it had Madame Dellard's, and also for the fact that her own son Louis had been fellow student at the Lycée Charlemagne.

"Why, is it you?" exclaimed she, greeting him with

enthusiasm. "Why did you not let us know you were coming to Paris?"

"I had not time, and left suddenly."

They talked together for a little while until suddenly the conversation took an odd turn.

The young man who had never before paid any attention to the personal affairs of the good woman, asked her if her position as widow of an officer was in order, if she received her pension regularly, if she placed her savings in a place of safety, or if she invested in safe undertakings.

"My papers and the small amount of money that I have," responded she, "are all in a bank. If anyone came here to kill me and steal, they would only find a few hundred francs in the house."

A few more words of vague cordiality, and Anastay took leave of Madame Labbé and her two daughters. A quarter of an hour later he arrived at rue Amclot, at the house of two old maiden ladies who had always been kind to him, since the time when he had lost his mother. Greetings over, they began to talk of the difficulties of the times.

"It is very hard to live to-day," said Anastay. "Money does not bring in much; even with a considerable capital, one only receives a very small income."

"At our age, my dear child, one has not a great many wants; if one has good health and a sufficiency, one does not want any more from Providence."

"I believe you; you both look splendid; you have the physique to last you a hundred years."

He laughed, arose, and went toward the door, came back, one hand obstinately fixed in the pocket of his great coat, where it seemed to move something. He hesitated, trembled a little, and then took a brusque leave of them.

At half-past four he rang at the front door of the Baroness Dellard's *appartement*.

It was she herself who opened the door to him. Under the Spanish lace, which draped her bonnet and her white hair, her eyes lit up with the joy and happiness which she felt in seeing him.

"You—my dear! How happy I am to see you! Come, let me embrace you."

"You are here, *maman*! I am glad."

“You are glad ! Me, I am overjoyed. Come, you must enter and tell me how it is you are here, and when Delphine, who has just gone out with a message for me, comes back, she shall make you a *café*.”

With which Madame Dellard caught hold of the hand of her protégé and led him into the dining-room. There they conversed together for a few minutes, while he doubtless invented some sort of story to explain his presence in Paris.

Presently, for some unknown reason, Madame Dellard left Anastay and entered the bedroom of her son, in all probability to unlock some *cache* to obtain money for which he may have pleaded. This assumption is more or less confirmed by the movements of Anastay, for he quietly followed her, drawing a butcher’s knife from his pocket as he did so.

When he entered the room her back was toward him. He raised his arm to strike the fatal blow. At that moment she turned ; perhaps he drew in his breath with a hiss of excitement, perhaps she was warned by a sudden premonition ! Her eyes met his, and in that brief glance she read her fate.

Too paralysed to plead with her lips for her life, her eyes instead spoke for her ; they filled with an imploring expression for mercy, and her whole soul must have poured itself into that look, for Anastay admitted at his trial that he nearly failed to carry out his murderous plan. He had, however, gone too far ; his heart rejected her plea, and with a quick movement he plunged his knife into her throat, and the old lady of seventy years of age crumpled to the ground.

She died instantly, as well she might, for the force of his blow almost severed the head from the body, in fact, it was found to be connected only by the vertebrae.

Stopping only to assure himself that he had done his work well, he proceeded to ransack the drawers in search of treasure, many of which he wrenched open with the aid of a pair of pincers, afterward found near the chimney.

He had put together nearly enough to satisfy him when there was a startling interruption ; straight into the room of death there walked the maid, Delphine Houbre, who had returned from her errand.

He experienced that ghastly sensation of being trapped—he saw her open her mouth to scream. Quicker than a panther he leapt upon her, and with the same knife that had already

caused so much damage, he struck at her again and again until, bloody with wounds, she fell to the ground, and was still and silent.

There was only one thought in his mind after that—flight. The maid had screamed, and Anastay was in a panic of terror. Forgetting his objective, oblivious of the pile of valuables lying near by, he slipped the knife back into his pocket and with the greatest haste possible left the *appartement*.

Even as he left, however, a streak of caution warned him he was making a fool of himself, and with a certain courage which one can do nothing else but admire, he steadied himself and walked quietly down the stairway.

The concierge was standing by his door. To him Anastay said calmly, "There seem to be robbers in your house, Monsieur. You would do well to keep your door closed ; I heard a cry." With which he left the building.

His next action was totally unnecessary and seems to be one of foolish bravado, for seeing a *gardien de la paix* at the next cross road he went up and asked him to go to the assistance of the concierge. It can only be that he must have admired his own cunning in dealing with the concierge, which so pleased him that, purely for his own satisfaction, he determined to repeat the episode.

Having seen the *agent de police* hurrying off he proceeded to a public lavatory. Here he washed himself carefully to see that no suspicious bloodstains betrayed the mark of Cain, and afterward, when he felt he was once more straight, he ventured into the streets and wandered about until he found a convenient opportunity to throw away the knife.

When he had done this he felt more free, so much so that he determined to indulge in a dinner—but with friends ! This might have been for one of two reasons : either that he genuinely wanted company for company's sake, or else by forced gaiety to keep away the dread spectre of a murdered woman, accusing him with eyes which at the same time pleaded for mercy.

In view of whom he took out to dinner that night it must be concluded that conscience troubled him not ; if he wanted guests at his table it was simply to amuse him, for incredible as it may sound, the people whom he took out to dine with him that night were the lady whom he originally had picked

out as his victim, and her two daughters. Could she then have known the events which had happened a few hours earlier, with what truth might she have said to herself, referring to the unfortunate Baroness, "There, but for the grace of God . . ."

In the meantime, back in the *appartement* of the murdered woman, the double crime had been discovered, and while the seriously injured maid was transferred to the Saint Louis Hospital, detectives were hastily summoned from the Préfecture de Police.

The rooms were firstly cleared of the neighbours who had flocked into them, after which the detectives commenced to look for clues. It was found that the murderer had forced a chiffonier of rosewood, and also several drawers, that among the many articles which he had intended to steal, and would have done but for the advent of the maid, were jewel caskets, decorations, banknotes and gold.

In due course an enquiry was conducted by the celebrated M. Goron.

Hardly had it started when many well-known witnesses appeared from all sides to give evidence, which naturally set the police into motion.

The first thing to occur was the arrest of a good man who came the day before, asking of neighbours and of the concierge information about the Baroness Dellard. On examination he proved to be a *chef* who wanted a place, so he was immediately released. The police next sought for a traveller in economic boilers who had been talking to the tenants of the building. They interrogated a bookmaker, affiliated to the *Bande de Neuilly*. Information was next given against a young man who, saying he was sent by the Minister of Commerce to make a statement to that Chamber about the syndicate for supplying *Eaux Gazeuses*, came to see the vice-president of that Company, but all of these men soon proved themselves innocent of the crime.

Two travellers turned up who claimed to have journeyed with a young man carrying a large knife, one between Clermont-Ferrand and St. Etienne, the other between le Creusot and Etang.

Monsieur Goron was not a man to be side-tracked by false clues. In any event one point was definitely established—

regarding the appearance of the assassin every one confirmed the others. About twenty-five years of age, in height about 1 metre, 60 centimetres, small-bodied, thin-faced, pale complexioned, wearing a brown moustache, which was rather thick beneath the nose, ending in two points.

He had, so it was stated, worn a summer weight overcoat, apparently new, of light-weight cloth, dark blue, with cloth and silk interwoven in the stuff diagonally; trousers of dark grey spotted cloth; a straight collar, a high hat, and carried under his arm a lawyer's portfolio and a new umbrella.

Another trail was set into motion when the Préfecture learned that on the 4th of December, toward four o'clock, half an hour before the crime, an individual, who answered in every particular to the above description, had called at 6, rue des Filles du Calvaire, and asked for Baron Dellard. In the absence of the concierge, no one could give him information, so he went up to the third floor where, until July 1891, the Baroness Dellard had lived, having left to take up her residence at 42, Boulevard du Temple. Not knowing this the man had rung the bell, and the door being answered, the maid of the new tenants explained the circumstances.

The concierge returned in the middle of all this explanation and told him the new address of the Baroness Dellard, whereupon the unknown man, who seemed rather nervous, went away, and some minutes afterward was seen at the corner of rue Amelot, apparently on the watch, probably waiting until the servant should go out.

It was certain then that the assassin knew the family of Dellard and the customs of the Baroness, but he could not have seen her for the last five months, and therefore was ignorant of her change of residence.

In that case who could it be? was the question M. Goron put to himself. Baron Dellard searched his memory in vain. It was a concierge, M. Douillette, who had, until April 1889, lived in the lodge of 6, rue des Filles du Calvaire, who first pronounced a name. "Anastay," he said, and the chief of the Préfecture carefully wrote it down.

By this time the police had found the death-dealing instrument which, thanks to the mark on the blade, they traced to the manufacturers, the firm of Trouillot-Landon, who had a factory at Thiers, and from them learned that it had been sold

to a wholesale dealer, M. Freignet, of the Grand Bazar of Lyon, who had sold it on the 28th October to a customer who resembled very closely the description of the suspected murderer.

From that time all correspondence to and from Lyon was put under strict surveillance. On 23rd December a letter sent from Lyon to a Monsieur Anastay, 19, rue de Valois, was intercepted. Inspector Jaume and Brigadier Barbaste went to that address. They took with them, to make assurance doubly certain, a plumber who had been working in 6, rue des Filles du Calvaire, when the visitor came who had asked for Baron Dellard. The plumber at once recognized the visitor of the 4th of December. After this Anastay was confronted with Delphine, who had just come out of hospital. The servant denounced him without any hesitation.

"It is he ! Confess it !—wretch !"

The next day, Christmas Day, in the presence of MM. Goron and Gévelot, a relative of the Baron Dellard, the young ex-officer decided at last to confess.

"Yes, I am the assassin—you are right. It was I who killed her—my benefactress—pardon—pardon!"

He threw himself on his knees, clasped his hands and sobbed ; then apparently comforted by his confession, he calmed down and explained his crime.

"It is women who have been my undoing. I have had many mistresses, but the one whom I adored above all was Madeleine Gonzalez. I wanted to see her rich and admired and happy. But how, on my pay, to comply with her caprices ?

"To achieve this I went and played at Charbonnières. I lost, and to pay I borrowed on all sides. At one time I owed eighteen thousand francs. I was deprived of my commission and realized I could never pay my debts.

"I lost my head, and it was then I came to Paris, resolved to assassinate the Baroness Dellard, whom I believed to be rich."

It was afterward known that at that epoch, Anastay had again asked from the young girl at Lyon, Valerie Ray, her hand in marriage. The mother of the girl had objected, saying she had not the usual *dot* to enable her to marry an officer.

"What does that matter ?" he had replied. "I will go and see my father, in Paris ; he will give me money."

On the 5th of December, the day after the crime, he had written to Madame Rey that the affair was going well. By the same post he wrote to Madeleine Gonzalez that he would try and secure her an engagement in Paris.

At the Assizes, which were held during the week ending the 28th of February, the Advocate-General Cruppi revealed that the St. Cyrian had dreamed of starting a hairdresser's shop, where old men could be shaved by young and pretty girls, a scheme which, without doubt, would have proved an attractive and paying proposition.

Probably he anticipated starting this with the 25,000 or 30,000 francs which he believed Baroness Dellard to possess, after which he proposed to marry Mlle. Rey while keeping the little dancer as his mistress.

Undoubtedly Anastay was an extraordinary type of criminal. Only an utterly unmoral man could have proposed marrying one girl and at the same time setting up another girl as his mistress. Most men wait, at any rate, a short time before indulging in a duplicate *ménage*.

Only the most callous of men could have killed his benefactress in the way he did, only the most level-headed of men could have so quickly collected together his wits after the moment of panic in the flat of Madame Dellard, to speak as he did to the concierge.

Only a man with a sense of conscience entirely missing from his make-up could, after such an abominable crime, have taken out to dine one whom he had originally selected as victim, while this same remark applies to what he did the two following days, as revealed at his trial; for, attiring himself in his uniform he went, with his brother, and mingled with the curious crowds which stood in front of the victim's residence, gazing as though expecting the drama to take place all over again for their especial benefit.

Finally only a brave man, a man willing to face death with a straight lip, a man content to accept his just dues, could have sustained the attitude adopted by Louis Anastay at his trial, for after appearing very agitated during his own interrogatory, he regained his calmness and later frankly acknowledged his guilt, refusing to avail himself of the pleas of extenuation which his counsel had drawn up, and stated that he deserved the full penalty of the law—a streak of gold glinting

in the dross, moreover a streak of, shall one say, bravery rarely revealed by the average murderer.

Needless to say Anastay was executed, as he richly deserved, yet there were some likeable traits in this man's character to make it a matter for regret that women could have obtained such a hold on his life that, compared to the continued acceptance of their favours, the rest of the world with its sunshine, its favours and success, its shadows, its errors of omission and commission, meant nothing.

So died a brave man, but a cowardly murderer.

THE TRAGEDY OF GINETTE

Mystery.

IV.—THE TRAGEDY OF GINETTE

GINETTE EDWARDS

THE story of Ginette's tragedy began on the night of the 24th of July, 1911, soon after the house-boat *Aimée* had dropped her anchor into the bed of the Rhine and moored for the night. A few words of explanation as to how the *Aimée* happened to be there, however, would not come amiss.

The *Aimée* belonged to Monsieur Alfred Edwards, millionaire journalist and part founder of the influential and now long-established *Matin*. A few weeks previously he had gathered together a party of friends, and taking them on board with him, they had set out for a journey along the Rhine, entering it through Holland.

On the 24th of July they had not long left behind them the Dutch frontier, and were *en route* for Wesel. The day had been scorching ; in the late afternoon the heat had not abated much ; even though draped tarpaulins protected the passengers from the direct rays of the sun, the warmth was still sufficiently overpowering for them to hesitate to do much else than recline listlessly in rocking-chairs, drinking iced champagne.

There was a heavy tide running, the yacht made slow progress, so much so that, although Wesel was their scheduled destination for the night, they were only on a level with the walled town of Emmerich, when Ginette, the petted wife of Monsieur Alfred Edwards, decided they must stop. Her wishes were orders ; the Captain complied, but when he ordered the helmsman to approach the bank, Ginette interrupted, desiring to remain in mid-stream rather than endure the smell of the barges—or the bargees !—and the curiosity of the natives. Here again her desires were a law unto themselves, but in this

case it is almost probable that they were the cause of her death, for if the yacht had been moored alongside the bank it is quite probable that she might have lived.

With the passing hours the sun disappeared below the horizon and a gathering storm blew up. Meanwhile the party on board the *Aimée* dined, eating lightly and wisely, but drinking in an altogether different fashion. Afterward the guests dispersed to different parts of the boat, some back to the rocking-chairs, others to their rooms.

Presently Ginette went below ; a minute or two later a faint cry was wafted up to those on deck.

“Did you hear ?” asked one ; “it was as if someone called.”

“It sounded like Ginette.”

“It—it’s—an—another of her little jokes,” mumbled one of the party unsteadily.

Suddenly alarmed, Monsieur Edwards rose to his feet and quickly hurried below. Arriving at Ginette’s room he knocked upon the door. Receiving no answer and finding it locked, he burst it open with his powerful shoulders.

The room was empty, but upon the Persian carpet was spread out the dress she had been wearing a few minutes previously ; in the air of the cabin there still lingered a faint suggestion of her perfume ; through the open casement window the Rhine sang its song.

Little perspicacity is needed to hazard what had happened ; with an agonized moan Edwards did not hesitate, but rushed out on to the deck and plunged into the river. Cleaving the water with his powerful shoulders he swam to and fro, but there was no trace of his wife. Ginette had disappeared !

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That, briefly, was the mystery of Ginette, and on the face of it no mystery at all ; to all intents and purposes Ginette had fallen through the window and had been carried away by the swiftly flowing river. Yet, for some unknown reason, ugly rumours began to circulate in Paris as soon as the news was flashed through. How they originated is not known, but at any rate the whispers spread, meanwhile gathering strength in tone and detail until at last it became openly acknowledged that Edwards was suspected of having murdered his wife by pushing her through the casement window into the water.

This was the position on the 31st of July, 1911, when the mortal remains of Madame Edwards were conveyed from the little chapel of Père-Lachaise to the family vault. Unfortunately, to the curious sightseers who had arrived in the cemetery, Edwards's attitude was that of a guilty man; to a prejudiced mind, his uneasy walk, his twitching features, were more evidence of a darkened conscience than the load of heavy sorrow.

The sinister rumour gathered weight; again it spread, dominated Paris, was passed on from boulevard to boulevard, at the theatre, in the editorial offices, on the Bourse. From out of nothing had developed a mystery!

Still more strange, the pernicious suggestion, even before this date, had not confined itself to the walls of Paris. It had even spread to Düsseldorf in Germany, and its echo was so loud that on the 26th of July the German authorities opened an inquest on the disappearance of Ginette—in the words of the Düsseldorf correspondent of the *Agence de la Presse Associée*:

“The Procureur Imperial has ordered an inquest to be opened on the conditions under which Mlle. Lantelme* met her death on board a yacht in the neighbourhood of Emmerich on the Rhine. The most contradictory rumours are rife at Düsseldorf; they have rendered this judicial measure necessary in order to endeavour to throw some light on the question as to whether it was a case of suicide, crime or accident.”

The inquest was rapid and decisive, for on the 27th, the day after its opening, consecutive to the finding of the body, Berlin wired that “the official inquest ended in a verdict of death due to falling overboard during a swoon”.

Despite lack of proof in evidence of malicious talk, regardless of the verdict of the German inquest, French opinion refused to accept the findings of a foreign body. Edwards was hated because he was powerful and rich, because his origin was doubly foreign—a Levantine. Consequently the mystery was not dropped; for many days the sole topic of conversation was of how and by whom Ginette had been killed.

*The professional name by which Madame Edwards was known.

Nothing further happened ; the days dragged by, and with the pressure of other matters the subject was gradually dropped, forgotten. That is, for the moment, the unsatisfactory end of the mystery of Ginette.

The point is, however, was Alfred Edwards guilty of the death of his wife ? Before reaching definite conclusions it is necessary to recall, in more detail, a little of the history.

The first telegram which made Paris acquainted with the news was sent by M. Charles Cuvillier, a composer and one of the guests on board the *Aimée*. It was addressed to Doctor Dauriac. Despatched from Marienbaum at 11.50 a.m. on the 25th of July—the morning after the disappearance—the wire was received at 12.30 p.m. and read : “Ginette drowned—Edwards very ill—Reply Himden at Emmerich.” At 6 p.m. Doctor Dauriac left for Emmerich via Cologne, and the following morning sent a wire to his wife saying : “Ginette fallen accident cabin window the night Monday Tuesday at one o’clock in full current, body not found.” This literal translation is, to say the least, a trifle vague, but as it has no direct bearing on the case, it is not worth stressing the point.

A short while afterward another telegram from the same source announced to Madame Dauriac that the body had been found, so that it is permissible to presume that the doctor had only just learned of the sad find a few minutes beforehand, for, having left Paris at 6 o’clock p.m., he could not have arrived in Cologne before 6 a.m. and the Dutch frontier before 8 a.m.

Another wire on the same day announced that the corpse had been found in the weeds of Ober-Meermeter, near Rees. According to subsequent statements, the body was clothed in a simple tea-gown, the face was set in calm lines, the hair loose, the left hand clutching the lid of a little silver box.

Before proceeding further it will be worth while considering two versions of what happened on the fatal night, one at first hand, that of a passenger, and the other, that of Dr. Dauriac, which is in direct opposition on a point of the greatest importance.

“A little after midnight,” said the passenger, “we left Emmerich for Wesel. After about an hour’s journey, and having drunk champagne, we went below to our cabins. Five minutes after we had separated we heard a sound as of a

smothered cry. Everyone rushed together in order to discover what had happened, and we saw that Ginette was not among us. . . .”

Therefore, according to this witness, Ginette was drowned at one o'clock in the morning, the boat having been travelling in the direction of Wesel for an hour. Taking into consideration the current, the *Aimée* could scarcely do more than six to eight kilometres per hour, and in consequence would have been well down the river, nearer to Rees.

Here is the report of Dr. Dauriac :

“. . . Customs formality on the Dutch frontier had retarded the progress of the *Aimée*. At half-past four in the evening the yacht was able to proceed to Wesel. About half-past seven, in the neighbourhood of Emmerich, while a storm was rising, Ginette ordered that they should anchor.

“After dinner, Ginette shut herself up in her boudoir. She sat herself on the window-ledge. A feeble cry piercing the night (about half-past twelve or one), while the tempest was raging, warned everybody.”

Dr. Dauriac's evidence confirms that the catastrophe took place at one o'clock in the morning, but the boat had been stopped five hours, and was near Emmerich.

This, therefore, is the first contradiction : Had the boat been going an hour ? Had it been at anchor for five hours ?

There is a second contradiction between these two reports and actual fact. The body, carried by a current which all agreed was violent, was found at Rees, *above* Emmerich, and below Wesel, in fact, about half-way between these two points. Therefore Ginette fell into the water between Wesel and Rees, 25 kilometres above the point where the *Aimée* would have been found if one is to believe its passengers.

Actual fact is confirmed by all the official documents relating to the place of decease. They are dated from Marienbaum, which is a little place on the left bank of the Rhine, situated between Rees and Wesel.

What is one to conclude ? That Edwards killed Ginette ? If so, the place would have made no difference to the affair. Emmerich, Rees, Wesel, “One kills everywhere”, as Farrere says. There is only one conclusion : the people of the *Aimée* did not know where they were. Why ? The witnesses admit it !

“We had drunk champagne.”

Ginette was in her cabin. There is no doubt upon that point, but was she alone? To all appearances—yes! If not, at the moment that the door, bolted on the inside, had been forced, the murderer would have been found there. Yet it was Edwards, Edwards the supposed assassin, who forced the door. Therefore one has to assume that, the deed done, he made his exit by the window—a feat which his corpulence rendered impossible in the first place, and in the second, with the boat rocking violently in the storm, for him to have regained his cabin by climbing up the side of the yacht and sliding over the rails would have been an achievement worthy of a professional acrobat.

Admitting, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the possibility of murder, it is necessary to concede also that Ginette had not struggled, that she had not cried out, that she continued to clutch hold of the silver lid, which thirty-six hours later was found in her frozen hands—the utter absurdity of the idea is obvious.

After all, why should Edwards kill her? Obviously not for any financial motive, for having been married without the usual contract, the marriage came under the régime of the *communauté*, which meant that the half of his fortune, which by law became Ginette's upon the day of the wedding, would be divided up among her relatives.

It could not have been for reasons of love, for although he had been married several times before, after Ginette's death he expressed no desire to share his name yet again.

In fact, no matter from what angle this tragedy is considered, the impossibility of Edwards being the murderer becomes more apparent, and as a final, though not decisive, argument, if there were indeed any cause for suspicion on the part of those on board, is it likely that all the fifteen people concerned—five passengers, one *femme de chambre*, one *maître d'hôtel*, and eight crew—would have maintained absolute silence?

Taking all the above facts into consideration it seems obvious that the death was not a case of murder. There remains, then, the theory of either suicide or accident. Why should Ginette commit suicide? Surely she was too well provided with the good things of life to wish to deprive herself of them at such an early age?

Even if she had not loved her husband she would have been no worse off than thousands of other women at that time—and even to-day—and if she had had a lover, would she not have fled to him rather than drown herself? Besides, if it had been suicide on her part it would have been to a certain extent premeditated, and there was no suggestion from her fellow guests that, on that evening, she was in any other than her usual gay and happy spirits.

With both murder and suicide theories negatived, only accident remains, and with all the circumstances in favour of this decision, it is easy to picture the scene when Ginette, tired and fatigued, returned to her cabin.

Having slipped out of her dress into a simple tea-gown, she sinks into a chair, but feeling giddy, sniffs at her smelling-salts, and afterward crosses to the window. Despite the fierce wind she opens the window and breathes in the fresh air. An extra large wave—the boat rocks—she loses her balance and, still clutching the smelling-salts, falls into the water—and the Rhine claims another victim.

Such was the end of Ginette Edwards, and it is difficult to comprehend why the ugly word “murder” should ever have been dragged into the case except by enemies of the powerful Alfred Edwards. Nevertheless, quite distinct from the death of Ginette, there are other mysterious circumstances still more baffling.

In the first place, it is necessary to say a few words about Ginette Edwards. Ginette, at the time of her marriage, was not unknown to the public, for she was the acknowledged sovereign of the Paris stage, and was known as Geneviève Lantelme, or, more familiarly to her many admirers, as the “magical little Lantelme, the little queen Ginette”.

Utterly charming, dainty and feminine, it was no wonder that Alfred Edwards fell in love with her as might—and probably did—many other men. Edwards was considerably older than she, being fifty-four to her twenty-eight, thus there was no concealing his advancing years, and against his younger competitors he would probably have fared very badly but for one factor. Edwards was rich, and was able to buy her, to use a harsh term.

The extraordinary part of the marriage was as follows :
One fine day the patron of a little inn, Jeanne d’Arc, next

to the station at Rouen, was idling on his doorstep when he saw approaching a tall, very smartly dressed man.

"Have you a room to let?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I will rent it for four months, and pay in advance."

"Very good, Monsieur. Number four is a very nice room."

"I do not need a bed. I shall not be living in it. You can relet it to anyone you like."

Doubtless the patron looked strangely at the speaker, who was already drawing notes from his pocket; it seemed to him rather extraordinary. But, then, money was money, and if the man was anxious to dispose of some . . . Being prudent he informed his client that he must enter his name on the hotel register.

"I was just going to suggest doing that," and the man signed: "Alfred Edwards, former director of the *Matin*."

At the end of four months Edwards was legally domiciled at Rouen, and soon after returned with a charming little woman, and said:

"I am getting married to-morrow. Have you any witnesses?"

"Certainly. There is X, who comes and plays dominoes every evening; Y, who is a carpenter; and Z, who is a decorative sculptor. I will find the fourth for you."

The following morning at eleven o'clock Lantelme became Madame Edwards.

What reason possessed Edwards to get married so secretly will probably become known only when Gabriel sounds the last trump, for there was no suggestion of secrecy as soon as they were husband and wife. That is the first of the mysteries which dogged the fatal marriage.

The second episode jumped into being on the 23rd of December, 1911, six months after the burial of Ginette, when one of the cemetery gardeners of Père-Lachaise, who was going to have a look at the tombs behind the mortuary chapel, was crossing the 89th division, the most abandoned corner of the cemetery.

"What a smell! Worse than a dead dog. *Mon Dieu*, a grill burst open!"

The man approached a Gothic monument bordering the

principal alley. He walked round it, saw a collection of objects at his feet, arrived before the wide-open door which let escape a pestilential scent, and looked.

The Edwards' monument had been violated !

Dismayed, the gardener rushed across the plateau and hurried to the head keeper, who, without delay, telephoned to the Commissaire de Police of la Roquette.

The magistrate, M. Deslandes, together with his secretary, M. Poggi, immediately hurried to the spot. Two hundred metres from the vault an unbearable and noisome odour seized the throats of the little group of grave-diggers and keepers.

"It would not be prudent to enter the vault without making certain that there are no mephitic gases," said the head keeper, M. Hanriot. "We will have some paper burnt there."

One of the grave-diggers opened wide the bronze door and threw down a burning newspaper into the opening. A second later an acrid smoke, black and thick, came up from the tomb.

"Fire ! Quick, the fire-brigade !"

An alarm was sent out, the fire-brigade from the rue Haxo answered it, and putting their pumps into action the vault was flooded.

Thus, for the second time in six months, Ginette was condemned by the sinister irony of Fate to be drowned.

"*Requies Aeterna*", says the device engraved on the front of the Edwards' monument. The eternal peace which she was thought to have found on entering the cemetery of Père-Lachaise was refused to her.

About 2.30 p.m., friends, among whom were Doctor Dauriac and Mme. Fossey, the mother of Lantelme, urgently summoned, arrived at the cemetery. Edwards himself was in Nice at the time.

"The bandits," sobbed Mme. Fossey, "they have profaned the Spanish Virgin which I gave to my poor daughter and which she had wanted for so long. And the enamel cross——"

They forced her to remain at the head keeper's while Dr. Dauriac went to the 89th division. They decided not to bring the corpse into the daylight, but to examine on the spot the violated triple-coffin.

First of all the firemen pumped out the water, to discover

subsequently that the fire was due to the lighted newspaper falling on wadding torn from the coffin, the slow combustion of the latter being set up, thus causing the abundant smoke.

Next they examined the coffin. Only the face and breast of Lantelme was uncovered, so they searched for the jewels, which had been buried with Ginette, and which popular rumour, as usual, had magnified tenfold.

On suggestions offered by friends, they first found a jade necklace, which a friend had given to Ginette and which she preferred to all her treasures, not excepting her famous pearl necklace, the string, in fact, from which Edwards had not wished her to be separated. It was this which gave rise to the legend that the pearls had been buried with her—the ignorant having confounded them with the modest present of a friend.

Under the lace-bordered pillow remained a little sachet containing the only jewels placed in the coffin with Ginette—a platinum slave bangle, a necklace of amethysts and emeralds, copies of the famous black and grey pearls, a portrait of her husband framed in silver gilt, the *tout ensemble* worth barely 1,200 francs. The vampires had passed over this collection.

Fortunately this noisy and sinister reappearance only gave the unhappy woman a single day's publicity. The day before, Bonnot's band had begun their series of exploits by a raid on the rue Ordener. Paris only gave a distraught and pitying attention to this second episode of the Lantelme affair.

The Préfecture, which had need of its whole personnel to fight against the motor-car bandits, could not pursue its enquiries very far. In the vault a bottle of ether was found; the chemist who sold it was discovered, but not its purchaser; the tools of the great crime were unearthed, but the owners were not tracked. The path by which the malefactors fled was traced, but not the fugitives themselves.

The corpse of unhappy Ginette was buried for the second time, and this time the vault was not disturbed until the 13th of March, 1914, when Alfred Edwards, to the last inconsolable for the loss of his darling wife, rejoined her in the cold fastnesses of the vault.

In fiction an author would not dare to exhaust his readers' credulity so far by even suggesting for one moment that the

mystery was not yet at an end, yet once again truth proved itself more strange than fiction. Though both Ginette and her husband were dead the story was to continue.

The next phase took place in June 1916, when the newspapers announced that, for the second time, the sepulchre of Lantelme had been violated. In ordinary circumstances the news would probably have been the cause of a great outcry, but—it was war-time. The thirty lines were swallowed up, passed over, for it was at the time when the *Hampshire* was lost, and the fort of Vaux had just fallen into the hands of the Crown Prince.

The malefactors of the second attack closely followed the example set by their predecessors of 1911. Having staved in the door they lifted up the flagstones, lowered themselves into the vault, and without hesitation as to which coffin belonged to the husband and which to the wife, they forced open the wooden coffin and then cut through the lead one inside.

What is the mystery of this double outrage? Assuming that the purpose of the first attempt was to secure the jewels thought to have been buried with the body of Mme. Edwards, why did the thieves leave what few there were there? Were they suddenly interrupted in their gruesome task, and, alarmed, did they flee? The fact of them leaving behind such palpable clues as the bottle of ether and the necessary tools, seem to support this theory.

Granted, then, that the first violation of the tomb was for the purpose of securing jewellery, what of the second attempt? After the first fiasco—to use a light word—the jewels were taken from the vault, and sufficient publicity was given to this fact. This must surely have been known to the criminals, therefore for what reason was the vault opened for the second time?

There the story must end. Only the evil grave-robbers can disclose the full story, and who knows but that they, too, met their end on the battlefield? The mystery of Ginette, like the mystery of the *Marie Celeste*, will probably never be solved.

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In their book *Les Morts Mystérieuses*, Messieurs Nadaud and Pelletier have considerably complicated matters by introducing an element of intrigue. For instance, on board

the house-boat *Aimée*, when Ginette goes down to her room for the last time, she

“Enters her room, the door of which she carefully locks, puts on a kimono and undoes her hair, which falls from her shoulders in bronze tresses.

“She sits herself at her tiny desk, takes a sheet of paper, and begins to write : ‘André, my beloved——’ ”

André, the Christian name of one of the most popular junior leads of that time ! The authors do not seek to disguise the romance. What, then, of that letter after Ginette had disappeared and her husband breaks into the cabin ?

“One of the passengers, who has followed him quickly, glances at the desk, and seeing there a letter commencing ‘André, my beloved’, quickly hides the sheet of paper—Fred has not seen it.”

Of this and a subsequent episode concerning this letter, soon after the body is recovered and is laid out in the fatal cabin, the authors say :

“And here takes place a poignant episode, unknown until this moment. One of the intimates, he who, at the time of the drama, intercepted the letter, had the pious idea to sew it in the hem of the kimono—it was necessary that Edwards should remain in ignorance (of it), if not this blow would surely be his last. But why not embalm the eternal sleep of Geneviève by the contact of the souvenir, by the material presence of her one supreme thought ?”

Evidently the authors have information denied to the general public, and it must be assumed that the revelation of these facts come from one of the house-boat party. Nevertheless, this letter so quietly penned, so quickly secreted, makes no material difference concerning the tragedy.

With the letter out of the way and the husband in ignorance of it, there can be no question of jealousy, a crime committed in the heat of a soul-destroying discovery—even assuming that a crime were possible. In the circumstances, therefore, and because all the other facts of the case can be verified and confirmed, which this fresh complication cannot be, I have omitted all mention of the letter.

EYE OF THE MORNING

Passion.

V.—EYE OF THE MORNING

MATI-HARI

ON the 7th of August, 1876, in the town of Leeuwarder, there was born to Adam Zelle and Autje van der Maclen, his wife, a little daughter, whom they named Marguerite Gertrude.

The early life of this child is wrapped in mystery ; only here and there has it been possible to peep behind the veil of her past ; consequently many are the various accounts of her youth, and of her first husband.

From the date of her birth nothing is known of the girl until she was twelve years of age, at which period of her life she was placed by her parents in a Buddhist temple in Burma, and by them pledged to a life of celibacy as a type of modern vestal virgin.

What had happened in the meantime it is difficult to say. In his book, *Queer People*, Sir Basil Thomson relates that while in the Dutch East Indies, Zeller [*sic*] married a Javanese woman and that Marguerite Gertrude was their offspring, but this does not confirm the hypothesis of other writers. On the other hand, would it be beyond the limitless stretch of imagination to suggest that the Javanese wife was a *step-mother* to little Marguerite ? This might explain the reason why a Christian father should place his daughter in a Buddhist temple, and it would, of course, be in keeping with the proverbial affections of a stepmother !

Subsequent to this there is again mystery. Sir Basil Thomson says Zeller brought his daughter home to Holland, where she married a Dutch naval officer of Scottish extraction, named Macleod, who divorced her.

Other writers affirm that when quite young she married

(in Holland) an officer in the Dutch Army, Captain Macleod. With him she went to India, where she divorced him and then conceived the idea of learning the wanton dances of Brahma.

As a matter of fact, there is every reason to believe both these reports wrong. What happened was this : before the child had long been in the Buddhist temple, her tempestuous temperament, the love of life which was so much a part of her personality in after-life, began to bubble up in her breast. The life of celibacy and virtual imprisonment was far from being to her taste, and, disgusted with the life, she determined to change or end it altogether.

She was just fourteen years of age, and a dancer in one of the great Buddhist festivals, when her eyes flashed into those of the British officer—a baronet. It was like tinder and steel. The resultant spark set light to her inflammable spirit, and love entered into her heart for the first time.

This new emotion, working in concert with her already dissatisfied state of mind, served to cause her to hurry up the step so long in contemplation, so she forthwith escaped from the temple and fled to join the officer.

They entered into a liaison, and later married ; of this union one boy and one girl were born ; but the monotonous life which, as the wife of an officer, she was compelled to lead, proved far too calm and peaceful for her exuberant nature, and there is little doubt that she would have left him, but in the meantime a climax occurred.

One of her maids, whom she had beaten and discharged, sought revenge, and persuaded one of the servants to poison the infant boy. Needless to say, this tragic death caused a great deal of scandal which, together with the subsequent sensation, is still remembered by the older residents in India.

Marguerite Gertrude was not satisfied to let justice take its own course : its machinery was too slow, if too certain, to please her. She started investigations upon her own, independent of the British authorities, until finally, in her own mind, she fixed the guilt upon one of the gardeners, so one evening she borrowed a revolver, and secreting it, pretended she was going for a stroll. She did not go far—only to the garden, where, meeting the unfortunate man whom she had chosen for her victim, she shot him dead.

She was immediately arrested, but everything was done to suppress the news and hush up the scandal, and apparently these efforts succeeded, for she was freed and told to leave British India never to return.

Needless to say this was just what she wanted, so stealing her daughter away from her husband, she took a boat to Europe and thus arrived in Marseilles. From there she made her way to Holland, the land of her birth, and here she placed her daughter in a convent, and here, too, in all possibility, she married Macleod.

However, whether it was at this period of her life or before when she married and divorced Macleod, her subsequent movements are well known, for from Holland she made her way to Paris, and there embarked upon a stage career, making her début on the 19th of August, 1905.

Everything was done on this Saturday night to make certain of her success. A music-hall in Montmartre was the *mise en scène* of her try-out ; when the curtain rose on her act it was to a scene of gorgeous Oriental splendour as conceived by Montmartre. Here, on the stage, had been built an ornamental pagoda of crude colouring, gold, black and red, decorated by fat Buddhas and tricephalic Sivas.

In the wings a melancholy flute wailed its peculiar tones, and as if replying to its music the flowers of one of the many baskets stirred slightly, a snake uplifted its head, then slowly uncoiled and quiveringly stretched its body into the air.

Suddenly the dancer appeared amid a cloud of diaphanous voile. The tight bandeau of gold around her forehead confined her thick hair, gathered in plaits ; her long, painted eyes, heavily lidded, glittered brightly, shadowed by her yellow-ochred face ; so much part of the picture was she that the audience sighed with excitement, and feverishly watched her lithe body rippling to the rhythm of the music, her limbs and body swaying voluptuously to its passion.

Presently the reptile glided from its nest, and, approaching her, wound itself up her leg and around her waist, until it collared itself round her neck and dancer and snake became one.

The applause of the audience thundered its welcome to the new dancer, and Mati-Hari knew she had triumphed.*

*Mati-Hari means in Javanese, "Eye of the Morning."

Paris acclaimed her the next morning. "This, perhaps, surpasses the idea of what one generally sees in the music-hall by its character of serious art, but it is very beautiful, and one must never complain of an excess of beauty." Thus said the newspapers.

During the years that followed Mati-Hari continued her career ; from one triumph she went on to the next—Rome, Berlin, Amsterdam. Wherever she went, like Cæsar, she conquered, and not only the admiration of her public, but the hearts of her admirers.

Wherever she went men fell in love with her : in Holland, the President of the Council, Van der Linden ; in Germany, the Crown Prince, the Duke of Brunswick, and a Préfet of Police ; in France, a director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several generals, a celebrated lawyer, a financier, and a man many times minister.

Her lovers were legion. Mati-Hari was as supreme a woman as she was an artist. No wonder her tastes were extravagant ; why not, when every wish was gratified, every desire fulfilled ? She was virtually a queen of courtesans, and international thief of hearts.

The world was her oyster, but of the many capitals to which she travelled, best of all she loved Paris, and did not attempt to disguise the fact. Nevertheless, August 1914, the outbreak of the Great War, found her in Berlin, where on the day of the declaration of war she was seen driving up and down the principal streets in the official carriage of the Préfet of Police.

Fortunately—and probably through the instrumentality of her highly placed friends—she managed to escape from Germany, and via Belgium, Holland and England, she eventually arrived in Paris, where she instantly volunteered for ambulance work, and for a little while served at Vittell.

However, she could not have remained long at Vittell, for in July 1915 she was dancing in Madrid.

As is well known, Spain during the War was the headquarters of the German Secret Service—though the Allies were not any less busy in that country—so that before long the special branch of Scotland Yard received information to the effect that Mati-Hari was consorting with members of the enemy Secret Service, and that she might soon be expected to be on her way back to Germany via Holland.

At that time the special branch was in the control of Sir Basil Thomson, and in his book, *Queer People*, already referred to, the author vividly tells the story of Mati-Hari's arrival in Falmouth early in 1916.

According to Sir Basil, Mati-Hari was escorted to Scotland Yard by special officers so that she could be questioned. He continues :

"I expected to see a lady who would bring the whole battery of her charms to bear upon the officers who were to question her. There walked into the room a severely practical person who was prepared to answer any question with a kind of reserved courtesy, who felt so sure of herself and of her innocence that all that remained in her was a desire to help her interrogators. The only thing graceful about her was her walk and the carriage of her head. She made no gestures and, to say truth, time had a little dimmed the charms of which we had heard so much, for at this time the lady must have been at least forty.

"I have said she was openness itself. She was ready with an answer to every question, and of all the people that I examined during the course of the War she was the 'quickest in the uptake'. If I quoted to her the name of some person in Spain with whom it was compromising to be seen in conversation, she was astounded. He a suspect? Surely we must be mistaken.

" 'I see how it is,' she said at last, 'you suspect me. Can I speak to you alone?' The room was cleared of all but one officer and myself. She looked at him interrogatively.

" 'Yes,' I replied, 'this gentleman and I may be regarded as one person.'

" 'Very well,' she said, 'then I am going to make a confession to you. I am a spy, but not, as you think, for the Germans, but for one of your allies—the French.'

"I do not know to this moment whether she thought we would believe her, but she plunged into a sea of reminiscence, telling us of the adventures she had undergone in pursuit of the objects of her employers. I wondered how many of them were true.

"We had altogether two long interviews with Mati-

Hari, and I am sure that she thought she had had the best of it. We were convinced now that she was acting for the Germans, and that she was then on her way to Germany with information which she had committed to memory. On the other hand, she had no intention of landing on British soil or of committing any act of espionage in British jurisdiction, and with nothing to support our view we could not very well detain her in England; so at the end of the second interview I said to her: 'Madame' (she spoke no English*), 'we are going to send you back to Spain, and if you will take the advice of someone nearly twice your age, give up what you have been doing.' She said, 'Sir, I thank you from my heart. I shall not forget your advice. What I have been doing I will do no more. You may trust me implicitly,' and within a month of her return to Spain she was at it again."

As a matter of fact there was a modicum of truth in what Mati-Hari told Sir Basil Thomson. She had indeed joined the French Secret Service, and it had come about in this way.

At Vittell Mati-Hari had, so early, betrayed her hand, for it was noticed that she paid great attention to military questions, and corresponded frequently with Amsterdam through the interpreter of the Consulate of Holland.

However, just when the authorities were about to open a secret enquiry, Mati-Hari suddenly returned to Paris, where she proceeded to pay violent attention to officers, mostly those of the Flying Corps.

All this time she continued to draw large sums of money from her bank, though at that time she was not earning any—at least as a dancer! Nevertheless as quickly, as she spent there was always more, and, strangely enough, the funds were always debited to her account by foreign banks.

In the meantime the Post Office was becoming troubled by her frequent correspondence with Holland, which was surrounded in mystery, as all her letters were sent in the diplomatic mail-bag.

*Is Sir Basil correct in asserting this fact? It is difficult to believe that a woman who had spent so many years of her life in British India, and who was so intimately connected with at least two Britons, could not speak English!

These two circumstances, reported to the Sûreté, once again revived dormant suspicions, and yet Mati-Hari again forestalled enquiries, this time by a *coup d'état* worthy of Talleyrand. One day the dancer appeared at the Bureau of Centralization for Military Information (D.C.R.), to which body she offered her services as an intelligence agent, or, in plainer words, a spy.

Her offer was accepted and she was sent to Spain, with what result has already been told.

In due course she returned to France, possibly to report to her department. She was staying at the hotel Plazzo-Athénée, when one morning Monsieur Priolet, Commissaire of Police, was shown into her bedroom.

The dancer sat up in bed, drank her chocolate, and made a *moué* of displeasure.

"I am heartbroken, Monsieur le Commissaire, that you have not given me warning of your visit. I am not very well. I should have asked you to postpone it."

Monsieur Priolet made her understand that his visit was one which could not be postponed, and politely insisted upon her arising forthwith and accompanying him elsewhere.

A quarter of an hour later she was face to face with the terrible Captain Bouchardon, fighting for her life, defending herself against the accusation that she was a spy in the pay of Germany, that she had betrayed the secrets of her adopted land.

The enquiry was held *en camera* before the Third Council of War, presided over by Colonel Somprou, Commandant of the "Garde Républicaine". The charge was brought against the dancer by Lieutenant Mornet, while the accused was defended by Maître Clunet.

Questions and answers were hurled to and fro: most of them relevant, some of them irrelevant. Like many other trials, there was much said which had bearing on the case, which in itself would take a volume to reproduce, so only a brief résumé of the principal points of accusation can possibly be included in this book.

They are, however, as will be seen, sufficiently damning to show the extent of the evidence against the accused.

Acc.: "Why were you in the carriage of the Préfet

of the Police at Berlin on the day of the declaration of war?"

Def. : "I was playing at Berlin. The Préfet, having among his duties the censor of the theatre, came to see my costumes. We had made an acquaintance. The day of the declaration of war I lunched with him in a fashionable restaurant; but the crowd, delirious, filled the streets to the point that I should never have been able to get home without the help of the Préfet, who took me in his own official carriage."

The defence stated that Mati-Hari was Dutch and admittedly a courtesan, therefore the above was a very trivial circumstance.

Acc. : "You entered into the service of the Chief of the German Secret Intelligence Department, and were given the number H. 21."

Def. : "The Chief of the Secret Intelligence Department was my lover. The number he gave me was only intended to facilitate our sentimental correspondence. The 30,000 marks which I received from him were in payment of my favours and not for my information."

Acc. : "You stayed seven months at the front to get information as to the movements of our troops."

Def. : "I stayed seven months at Vittell to nurse Captain Marlow, blinded in the war, and the only man I have ever loved."

Acc. : "At Paris, where you returned as soon as you felt yourself watched, you sought the society exclusively of officers. At the same time you carried on a correspondence with Germany, by the intermediary of the Legation of Holland."

Def. : "Exactly, but it was not my fault if my lover were the Chief of the Secret Service of Germany. I never sent him information."

Acc. : "You lie. We know the contents of the letters which were sent in the Dutch diplomatic mail-bag. Why did you ask to enter into the Secret Service of France?"

Def. : "Because I had many debts and very little money."

Acc. : "You have given us information as to the places on the coast of Morocco, where the submarines were laying mines, and also about the places round about Spain where they get stores. From where did you get this information?"

Def. : "It was imaginary, but given to obtain confidence. I wished to serve France."

Acc. : "To nonplus you, we gave you a pseudo list of agents whom we had in Belgium. All the names were false except one, an international spy, of whom we wished to be quit. He was shot."

Def. : "I do not understand you."

Acc. : "At the Grand Hotel at Madrid you were very intimate with the German Naval Attaché, von Kroon, also with the Military Attaché, von Kalle. They told you to return to France, and, by radio, ask Amsterdam for 15,000 pesetas in payment of your services. The Eiffel Tower took your message, which we were able to decode."

Def. : "This is perfectly true. I was the mistress of von Kroon, who found it very pleasant to let me be paid by his government."

En passant, this evidence throws a sharp illumination upon the methods of the French Government—and doubtless other Governments as well—in disposing of spies who had served their purpose and who might subsequently serve as witnesses against their previous employers. Presumably the spy betrayed by Mati-Hari had once been in the pay of the French Secret Service. What was their gratitude for the services he had rendered them? They directly betrayed him into the hands of the enemy that he might be shot!

However, the fate of Mati-Hari was sealed, notwithstanding the plea of the defence that many items of the information which told against the dancer were furnished by the service of "anti-espionage", that the prosecution's sources of information were often "suspect" and unreliable, and lacking full proof of information; also that much of it was given in return of a monetary consideration.

Commenting upon this argument, if this were the best effort which could be furnished for Mati-Hari's defence, it is not surprising that the verdict was that of "guilty". The

fact that she was sending correspondence into Holland under cover of the diplomatic mail-bag was suspicious in itself, and her plea of love correspondence rather childish. Were her letters ever so ardent it is questionable, in view of her reputation, that she had not hitherto sent similar love tokens through the usual channels as supplied by the post office. Why, then, in that peculiar instance, should she have been super-cautious?

As for the number H. 21, he who gave it to her must have been a fine lover to have thus endangered his mistress, and all for the sake of a few love-letters; in fact, his thoughtlessness upon that point is in direct contrast to the 30,000 marks which he paid her in settlement of favours received, and so long afterward, for there was no trace of her having been in Holland since the War.

Apparently the authorities were aware of the contents of the letters which were sent in the Dutch mail-bag. Was that source of information unreliable? If, in such cases, government officials are not to be trusted, then surely one can ask—who is?

As for the Eiffel Tower and the intercepted message, all governments are noted for their lack of financial morality and total disregard for economy, but, indeed, the German Government must have been an obliging one to have paid out 15,000 pesetas for her services as mistress to one of their naval attachés! It is to be feared that if that system became a universal custom most governments would soon be bankrupt!

Certainly the deposition of one witness for the defence was interesting, namely, that of the highest official of the Quai d'Orsay, whose mistress Mati-Hari had been.

Acc.: "At any moment did the woman by chance ask of you any information?"

"Never," responded the witness.

Defenders of Mati-Hari refer to this emphatic denial and then ask would she, who had under her thumb one of the highest French diplomats, who also kept up a love correspondence with a Minister of War, who had only to bring a little pressure to bear to collect real information, would she stoop to run after poor little scraps of information from flying men or young subalterns?

They seem to forget that the diplomat and the Minister of War would be the last people on earth a clever woman would trouble for information, for they would, or should be, constantly on their guard, from very training alert and suspicious of the slightest questioning. Whereas, on the contrary, from the young officers, full of enthusiasm, reckless and happy-go-lucky, it would have been simple to have garnered in stray scraps of information, however unimportant. A jigsaw puzzle possesses many pieces, but when they are put together by a master-hand a picture results !

On the 25th of July, 1916, Mati-Hari was condemned to death, but not until the 13th of October did the execution take place at Vincennes, to where she had been taken from the St. Lazare Prison.

She was awakened at five o'clock in the morning. Prepared for the end, she dressed herself in a dark dress trimmed with fur, placed on her head a large felt hat, on her hands she slipped a pair of lavender kid gloves. She was driven in a motor-car with closed blinds to the place of execution.

Whatever she may have been in life, at the moment of her death Mati-Hari was a brave woman. When Pasteur Darboux would have given the last ministrations she gently put him aside, and bravely faced the row of dragoons grimly outspread before her.

Lifting her head proudly, she walked toward the post and leaned against it. She refused to be blindfolded, but kissed a salute to the soldiers. Then she smiled, and even as her lips parted, the fatal command rang out and Marguerite Gertrude Zelle died.

THE MURDER OF GOUFFÉ

Passion and Murder.

VI.—THE MURDER OF GOUFFÉ

GABRIELLE BOMPARD. MICHAEL EYRAUD

IN studying the death, on the 26th of July, 1889, of Gouffé, who was murdered by as pretty a pair of criminals as one can possibly imagine, it is difficult to decide which was the worse, the woman Gabrielle Bompard, or her lover Eyraud. Of course Eyraud was a thorough-paced scoundrel even before he committed the culminating crime of murder, whereas Gabrielle Bompard was just a *demi-mondaine* frequenting the lower circles of Parisian society. She was, notwithstanding, a woman, and as such it is almost incomprehensible that she could have so easily cast from her every feminine trait, any and every one of which should have protested against her taking part in such an abominable atrocity.

Eyraud, the son of an innkeeper in St. Etienne, commenced very early to live his life of adventure, but a just punishment eventually overtook him, and he was sentenced to be detained in a penitentiary colony. From there he graduated into the ranks of the Foreign Legion. In 1862 France sent an expeditionary force, undertaken by Napoleon III, into Mexico in order to found an Empire for the Archduke of Austria, in which Eyraud took part, but apparently he had no stomach for fighting, for in 1863, by which time he had managed to gain the rank of corporal, he deserted. In his absence he was condemned to death, but the fate which he justly deserved was not yet to overtake him, for as he never turned up again it was obviously impossible to carry out the sentence.

His next appearance is in the ranks of the guerilla Tuaregs.

For some time after this there is no trace of his movements, but in due course he migrated to the United States of America, where his compelling ways and his smooth tongue secured him a good position as the American representative of an English firm. Before long he was dismissed for indelicacy, which excuse can easily be construed as covering a multitude of sins. To a man of his type a set-back of that kind was of no account ; he returned to France and became associated with a distillery in Sèvres which brought him into the Bankruptcy Court. Later he moved to Paris where, in the rue d'Hauteville, he worked with a Monsieur Fribourg, merchant, whom he also ruined in due course.

During these years of reprehensible vagabondage he met and married a worthy woman with a respectably sized *dot*, but one can well imagine that it did not take him long to spend this money, and having done so he deserted her to seek pastures new.

Such had been his life, full of misery and adventure, in which he left behind him sometimes a trail of unhappiness and more often of ruin, petty theft, larceny, and other disreputable actions, when one warm evening in August 1888 he sauntered toward the café Terminus St. Lazare.

The terrace was crowded with happy people, who, engaged in drinking their bock, or their café, or else sipping a crystal-line liqueur, were enjoying the glorious sunset which, in a blaze of subtle colour, was heralding the approaching dusk.

There were, indeed, many clients for the smiling *patron*, for home-going suburbanites flocked to the tables for a last gossip before returning to the bosom of their families, and intermingled with those who patiently awaited the arrival of the express from Normandy ; and to the broadminded Parisians the picture was not spoiled by several pretty ladies who darted provoking and inviting glances from under their dark eyelashes at all unaccompanied masculine neighbours.

Among those who had chosen to step along the broad, smooth road, lamentably heedless of the inevitable precipice ahead, was one who particularly attracted attention, for under a dainty brown toque could be glimpsed profuse masses of raven-black hair, admirably showing off to their best advantage two bright, bold eyes below, which coquettishly twinkled and gazed in every direction, no less seductive than the pair of

carmine lips parted at exactly the right width to expose twin rows of pearly teeth.

She was, without doubt, extremely pretty, and it would seem that kind Nature had been particularly lavish in her generosity, for Gabrielle Bompard possessed a figure for which many a more virtuous woman has sighed ; moreover, it was one which, moulding itself into whatever clothes she might care to wear, needed no expert fitting to expose its shapeliness to the best advantage.

Only in one respect, it would seem, had Nature failed to produce in her a being of perfection, for the heart which beat beneath the pretty bust was, as will be seen later, devoid of any semblance of human pity or sympathy ; it was a heart of stone—pitiless, icy and impassionate. However, as she sat on the terrace, nibbling the straw of her iced orangeade, it can well be conceived that in looks she was an angel, and it cannot be a matter for wonder that the attention of Eyraud, ever quick to remark a beautiful woman, should have been immediately arrested as he approached the café.

In the meantime Gabrielle was fidgety, for the air was hot and humid ; she could feel tiny beads of perspiration trickling from the pores of her skin, and that, she knew, would not help to improve her appearance. Besides, she was bored, possibly by reflecting upon her past life, though whatever memories may have worried her, it must have been the quality rather than the quantity, for she was still scarcely more than a girl in years, just twenty-two.

As a young girl she had been highly-strung, but also, strangely enough, happy-go-lucky and very gay, interested in and living only for the joys and pleasures of life. Consequently, born though she was of worthy family, it is not surprising that the provincial town of Lille seemed far too quiet and peaceful, that Paris became her dream, her Mecca.

It was in vain that her parents, to curb the restive spirit, placed her in a boarding-school. She ran away and returned home. Still not daunted they tried again, choosing another school, but the result was precisely the same. They were in despair, but Gabrielle settled the matter once and for all by stealing a sum of money from them, and, with its assistance, at last set foot in the city which had for so long been the

centre of her thoughts. Once settled she proceeded—to quote her own words—“to live her own life”.

Her history during the subsequent years is no different from that of thousands of other girls who “lead their own lives”, and but for the advent of Eyraud, so it would have probably remained until her death: she would have died unknown, unwanted and unclaimed.

Eyraud’s keen eye noted the girl as she sat there, was intrigued, and decided in his mind that they must become better acquainted. It was a simple matter to become introduced; he did so by walking up to her, as she sat with her back to him, and murmuring in her ear:

“You seem very upset, mademoiselle.”

Her first feeling toward the newcomer as she turned round, startled, was that of repulsion; possibly premonition of the end of her life to which her association with the man was to bring her; possibly because of some metallic ring in his voice; and it was in an unfavourable light with which she surveyed Eyraud. Her first glimpse of him did not help to disperse the vague, haunting distrust, for she saw a head of hair already snow-white at the temples, a wrinkled forehead, a short-cropped, pepper-and-salt moustache, thick, sensuous lips, a square jaw and a thick bull-neck; altogether the typical physiognomy of a human hawk, a man of prey.

Having observed his features as a whole she fixed her gaze directly into his eyes, and tinder and flint met—the fatal spark was struck. The fear did not at once leave her, but at the same time she was attracted—hypnotized as though by the eyes of a reptile. She seemed to feel the burning warmth of his devouring gaze, so fierce, so intense, that her heart appeared to miss a beat, and she answered distractedly:

“It is so very warm this evening. I do not know what is the matter; perhaps I am fatigued——”

She looked up; his gaze was fixed, insistent, and uneasily her tiny hands fidgeted with the buttons of her dress. Eyraud was not displeased; her voice contained music, and already her velvet eyes, which knew so well how to conquer the heart, were quickly enmeshing him within their toils. He leaned across the table and murmured sibilantly:

“This evening I shall be alone, mademoiselle. You will dine with me?”

Her answer was a submissive smile.

During the months which followed these two lived contentedly together. Eyraud found fresh employment in an office in the rue d'Hauteville, and with his earnings was able to maintain her in a modest hotel in one of the poorer parts of Paris. With this she was quite content, for she had come to love Eyraud.

It could not be expected, however, that a restless spirit as Eyraud's could for very long be content with such a vegetable existence. Everything was all right with him during the winter months, when the evenings were dark and gloomy, and there was the variety of amusements for which his soul craved ; but once spring came round again, and, warming to the influence of the sun, the sap began to work, the leaves to bud, and early flowers open wide their blooms, the roving gipsy germ ever present in his blood began to react in sympathy, and he hungered for new faces, new surroundings. For some time he managed to retain these thoughts to himself, but after a while his irritableness and distraction became evident to Gabrielle, and one day she questioned him.

Noticing him gazing absently out of the window, she asked : "Of what are you thinking, dear ?"

Was his cunning answer already prepared in his mind, or did he merely see an opportunity to speak, and made haste to seize it ? One cannot tell, yet Eyraud was perhaps attracted more to this girl than he had been to anyone else in his life, and it would not be a far-fetched theory to suggest that horrible plans were already revolving in his mind.

"I am thinking that we shall soon have—to—part."

The prospect filled her with dismay as it suddenly dawned upon her that to be parted from her lover would be the end of life for her. She threw herself on her knees beside him, and catching hold of his hands hugged them to her bosom.

"My darling ! You must not say such a thing. It would break my heart." Her voice broke piteously. "Do not leave me behind if you must go. Let me come with you. I will be your slave to order about as you please, I will be as dirt beneath your feet ; I will do anything that I may live near you, but I cannot, will not leave you."

“Very well, then, we will go away together. We will go on a ‘honeymoon’ !” and he laughed softly.

Their “honeymoon” consisted of a series of moves, first in one quarter, then in another, until finally they became possessed of a magnificent flat. The money—— An all too trusting employee had one day entrusted 5,000 francs to Eyraud’s ever-ready hands. Further explanation is scarcely necessary.

Even 5,000 francs, which in those days equalled £200, will not last for ever, and the money began to disappear with the rapidity with which most money does, honestly begotten or otherwise. Eyraud became as correspondingly uneasy—an aggravating sensation which was not softened by the fact that the owner of the deposit was exhausting his patience. In addition to these troubles it may be safely assumed that the taste of good living had given Eyraud an appetite for more, beside which he had no wish to be forcibly parted from his loving mistress.

Like the growth of a snowball his troubles began to accumulate, and he became desperate. Life, even luxurious as it was at the time, became intolerable for the constant prickings of fear, and the knowledge that a complaint had been made in official quarters proved the culminating point ; thus Eyraud began to evolve the plot which was to result in the death of Gouffé.

At this point it is interesting to analyse the characters of the two friends. Money had to be procured at all costs, and that cost was to be a human life. Quite calmly they accepted this fact, and like two monstrous spiders they began the spinning of their silky web. Unlike real spiders, however, they were not content in waiting for the foolish fly to walk into the parlour, but they looked round among all the people they knew to choose which fly they should ensnare into their web of death.

Think of it—try to imagine the ghastly callousness of two human beings who could prepare the death of a person as yet unknown. They were not actuated by hate, love, passion, or any of the other emotions which are so often responsible for murder, but by sheer greed, a need for money to live the lives of more gentle folk.

However, this is anticipation ! The first part of the deeply-

laid plan was to flee to London for a double purpose, the first, that of evading his creditor—if the unfortunate employee could be termed such—while the second reason is revealed below. So on the 1st of July, 1889, Eyraud entrained for London, leaving Gabrielle behind him, from which one may gather that there was not enough money in the exchequer to pay the double journey.

Either because she saw no reason why she should face the music alone, or because she was afraid to trust Eyraud out of her sight, Gabrielle determined to follow him, and racked her brain for some method of raising the necessary funds. Her next act gives a slight clue to her real character, for only one from whom every vestige of human feeling had been driven could have written her parents for money, pleading that she was dying of hunger on the streets of Paris.

Could such an appeal fail to meet with a ready response? Almost by return she received 600 francs, and within seven days of being parted this precious pair were together again—in London.

A few days later they went on a shopping tour; there were many things to be purchased, and in the course of their travels round the shopping district they came at length to Peter Robinson's, and from there they purchased an extremely strong red-and-white silk cord. Possibly the girl who sold it to them may have thought with envy of a gorgeous drawing-room, and the handsome curtains which the cord would keep in place!

From another shop they acquired a trunk of very large dimensions, capable of carrying quite a respectably-sized wardrobe; from elsewhere many yards of cord for the trunk, from an ironmonger's a pulley and block, and finally from a theatrical costumier's a false beard. Having obtained all they wanted, the couple returned to Paris on the 24th of July.

There being ample accommodation in those days, Gabrielle had no difficulty in tracing a discreet little apartment situated at the bottom of a courtyard, on the ground floor of number 3, rue Tronson-Ducoudray, and this she rented in the name of Labordère. Then Eyraud and she moved in with all their belongings. A few days later they were hard at work.

Eyraud began his final preparations by attaching to the ceiling the pulley which they had purchased in London, and

disguised it by hanging round it a decoration which effectively camouflaged it. Next he threaded it with the red-and-white silk cord, one end of which he tied in a substantial noose, while the other he hid behind the double curtains of the window.

Meanwhile Gabrielle sat at the open window busily needle-working. The sun was bright, the air warm, and her spirits rose in sympathy until presently she broke into music, and the sound of her fresh young voice floated trillingly into the air as she sang a series of sweet songs, fragrant in words and tune, and the beat of the music was the beat of her needle as it plied to and fro, joining squares of thick canvas into a large sack.

The pulley ready and the sack finished, the trap was fully sprung, the web completed. There now remained only the victim to be chosen, and so Gabrielle and Eyraud sat down to review their respective friends and acquaintances.

At first Eyraud believed he had thought of the very man, a jeweller whom he was sure he could tempt into their parlour and bring with him 50,000 francs worth of jewellery, but sane reflection assured him that such a course might be dangerous, for it was more than possible that in the records at his shop he might leave the address of his prospective client, so he thought of another, then another, until Gouffé flashed into his memory. Gouffé, the busy bailiff! By mutual consent Gouffé was marked down as their prey. He knew Eyraud well, for they had spent many a joyous evening with each other; he also knew Gabrielle very well, and had, indeed, confessed to owning a soft spot in his heart for her; above all he was rich. Therefore Gouffé it should be—and the faces of the two conspirators beamed in anticipation.

The jaws of the trap began to close about two o'clock on the 26th of July. Eyraud, knowing the habits of the other, and aware that Gouffé would pass a certain corner at that time, stationed himself there, and in due course the two men came face to face.

As they gazed at each other Eyraud creased his face into a smile of satisfaction, and glibly ejaculated: "What a pleasant surprise!"

Gouffé seized the hand of the other man in an energetic grip. "My dear fellow, the pleasure is more mine. It is

some time since we have met. How are you feeling, and—how is Gabrielle?”

Eyraud dropped his eyes and made a vague gesture. “I do not know, we are no longer together. As you well know”—and here he winked slyly at the other—“such affairs do not last for always. Doubtless I am more than replaced by now. But you, old friend, how goes the world with you and yours?”

Arm in arm they walked together discussing the past. Suddenly Eyraud looked up, and pulled his companion to a halt. “Talk of the angels!” he murmured. Gabrielle was coming toward them, covering the ground with a quick but graceful trot. She had not yet seen them, so Eyraud, with a whispered apology, disappeared. Two or three seconds later Gabrielle looked up and exclaimed with joy:

“Monsieur Gouffé!”

There were rejoicings, and Gouffé became more enamoured than ever by the arch looks Gabrielle flashed at him until he could retain his patience no longer.

“I hear you are no longer living with my friend Eyraud.”

“Who told you that?” she asked quickly.

“Who but Eyraud himself, from whom I have only just parted.”

Her mouth drooped pathetically. “It is true, monsieur. Often at times our tempers did not agree; we were always quarrelling until we arranged to part, and now—now I have no nice friend to look after me.”

“Hush!” he remonstrated. “You must not say that, it is not true. I will look after you, child. Tell me where you live and I will call upon you to-night if you will name a time.”

The light of hope appeared to dawn in her eyes. “Very well, monsieur. Come to 3, rue Tronson-Ducoudray, at fifteen minutes past eight.”

Thus was the assignation made, and while Gabrielle hurried home to acquaint her partner with her success, Gouffé slowly proceeded on his way, a gleam of anticipation lighting his face.

It is scarcely necessary to relate that when Monsieur Gouffé returned home that afternoon he mentioned nothing of Gabrielle Bompard to his three young daughters, but when

they would have dragged him into the drawing-room to be with them, he fondly refused, telling them that he must soon go, for he was dining in town. When he saw their faces drop a spasm of regret must have touched him, for he promised to take them to the theatre the next day, and their faces lighted up immediately, and while they discussed which play it might be, their father prepared himself for Gabrielle.

He took special pains with his toilet that night, choosing for his hat a tall silk, of which the wings were curled delicately into the air, as was the fashion at that time. Underneath a close-fitting, long coat, he wore black-and-white check trousers, his ankles were warmed by white spats, and his brown kid-gloved hands fondly handled a gold-headed walking-stick. Thus attired he set out, and progressed toward a café on the Boulevard Montmartre, and if many looks were cast in his direction it was not that he did not deserve them, for he was a fine-looking man, and his beard was very carefully trimmed to a double point.

In due course he arrived at his favourite café, where he drank a glass of absinthe, chatting to a financial journalist and a notorious anarchist. It is solemn to reflect that this was the last that was ever seen of him by any of his friends.

Gouffé was punctual—as the clock struck the quarter-hour he was shown into Gabrielle's room. Here Eyraud had carefully set his stage. There was but one place vacant, an easy chair in which it was obvious that Gabrielle would sit, and Gouffé's eyes flickered round the room in search of a seat. There was not one, so Gabrielle motioned him to her bed. He approached it, sat down—and the jaws of the trap closed for good. With a rapid movement Eyraud slipped the silk noose over his head, threw his weight upon the other end, and the body of Gouffé swung into the air; thus the fiendish murder reached its culmination. The deed was done.

For a few seconds Gouffé struggled convulsively, then sagged listlessly, and Eyraud let go the silken rope so that the body fell with a thud. With a white face and chattering teeth he surveyed his handiwork, but the sight was unnerving, so he crossed the room to where stood a bottle of cognac, and swallowed down at a gulp glass after glass, until presently his blood warmed again to the artificial heat, and his

courage, even if it were of Dutch origin, returned. Calling Gabrielle he commenced to undress the still warm body, and with her assistance the work was soon over. The clothes free of the corpse, they avidly searched the pockets, taking from them a watch, a bunch of keys and 150 francs; from his finger a ring. That was all, but they were not disappointed, for the keys represented the entry into Gouffé's office where there was always money.

With scarcely a glance at his victim Eyraud hurried from the room, leaving Gabrielle with the corpse. A quick walk and he arrived at the building in which Gouffé had his office. No one was about, and he slipped upstairs and let himself into the room just as the clock struck the hour of 9.30 p.m.

By this time he was in the grip of a cowardly fear, his nerves were torn to shreds. Shaking all over, flinching from his own shadow, he commenced his search, trying first one drawer, then another, all the time his gaze fluttering toward the door. Passing footsteps must have sounded then to his guilty conscience like the tramp of the police, the bell for the concierge like the knell of doom.

The minutes passed and still he failed to find the money for which the great crime had been committed. In his terror his eyes were unseeing, his fingers fumbling, and so he overlooked the sum of 14,000 francs which lay carelessly underneath some loose papers. Appalled by his lack of success, terrified by such sounds of the outside world which penetrated to the office, he could stand the strain no longer. Snatching up a hat—Gouffé's hat—he scurried from the room.

Below the concierge stood in the hall, sorting out the post which had just arrived. He glanced quickly upward, but the figure was vaguely familiar, the hat undoubtedly so, and his glance dropped to the bundle of letters.

"The evening post, monsieur," he said, and held his hand out with the correspondence as Eyraud passed. The murderer snatched the letters, and, like a whirlwind, disappeared from sight before the concierge had entirely recovered from his astonishment at the mysterious action of the bailiff.

Gabrielle needed no telling to acquaint her of Eyraud's

failure. A glance at his white, disappointed face was sufficient.

"Ah well!" she murmured philosophically, shrugging her shoulders; "now for the body."

They were well prepared. First they slipped the corpse into the sack which Gabrielle had sewn together and then, folding the bundle with difficulty, they squeezed it into the trunk which they had bought in London, and shut down the lid, taking care to lock it securely.

Their first qualms banished, they each discovered that a hungry stomach was clamouring for food, so already forgetting their dastardly deed, they sallied forth to a restaurant then situate at 29, Place de la Madeleine, and proceeded to eat a hearty meal, which they washed down with champagne purchased with their blood money, and while Gabrielle fingered idly the silk cord which, after the crime, she had taken out from the pulley and coquettishly placed around her own waist, they lifted their glasses and drank to each other: "*Ta santé!*"

Afterward, Eyraud returned home, and Gabrielle returned to the rue Tronson-Ducoudray, and there slept the night, callously indifferent to her grisly company, the battered corpse of the unfortunate Gouffé.

Without any hitch the plans they had so cunningly prepared went on. About nine o'clock the next morning a cab drove up to their residence, and clambering down from his seat the cabman, dressed in the conventional long greenish cloak and leather hat, knocked upon their door.

They were dressed and ready for him. Having delivered the hand baggage to him, which he placed within the cab, they motioned to the large trunk which was to accompany them.

The cabby approached and attempted to lift it; his eyebrows went up in surprise.

"Good God, but this is heavy!"

Eyraud shrugged his shoulders. "What do you expect? We go on a long journey."

Strong as he was the *cocher* could not carry it, so with the help of Eyraud he dragged it along the floor, out of the door, and across the cobblestones to the side of the cab, jolting and banging it about with the callousness of *cochers* and

porteurs. Somehow they hoisted the heavy baggage up to the roof, after which they proceeded to the Lyon station.

There they shot the trunk down, and for a minute or so it remained unattended on the pavement while the *cocher* went to search for a porter. Glancing casually at it, Gabrielle felt a spasm of fear travel up her spine, leaving her heart cold, her cheeks pale, for emerging from one of the corners of the trunk she saw a tiny spot of congealed blood.

"Oh God! Look!" she murmured hysterically to Eyraud, and pointed out what she had seen.

He laughed cynically. "He is emptying himself. Wipe it off."

With a rapid glance to see that she was unobserved, Gabrielle took from her bag a delicate lace handkerchief, profusely perfumed, and with it wiped away the accusing drop of blood, and by the time the porter appeared on the scene she had regained her composure, and was able to superintend the disposition of the luggage while Eyraud purchased two tickets to Marseilles.

That evening they spent in room number six of the hotel de Toulouse in Lyon-Perrache. Despite the weariness of the fatiguing day they had spent travelling, neither of them could sleep, possibly because that night their consciences were not drugged, nor their senses deadened by champagne, and also because of a still more unpleasant reason, namely, that affected by the hot climate of the South of France the body was already beginning to exhale an obnoxious odour, and they did not dare to leave it out of their sight. Before morning dawned Eyraud made up his mind that it was necessary to dispose of the trunk.

The next day, therefore, they obtained a cart, and as soon as the shades of night had fallen sufficiently to cloak their movements, they conveyed the trunk to the cart and commenced a journey in the direction of Millery.

If Gabrielle Bompard's description of that night can be believed it was truly a gorgeous evening, for the air was full of natural perfume from the wild trees and plants, and the night alive with the music of nightingales. As callous as ever the couple drove on, the balmy influence of the summer night entering into their blood, so that before they had proceeded far they had nigh on forgotten their purpose, and were

close together, one arm of his around her waist, her head upon his shoulder.

However, in spite of Mademoiselle Bompard's flamboyancy, one must assume that the reverie into which they allowed themselves to drop evidently was not so deep that, when they arrived at a convenient spot for the next phase of their crime, they passed on their way, oblivious for the tender dreams in which their thoughts were presumably wrapped, for, arriving along the top of a ravine, they stopped the cart, opened the trunk, extracted the remains of what had been a live man but a few days before, and heaved it over the parapet, where it fell with a crash into the woods below.

They drove on. There was now only the trunk and the clothes to lose—a comparatively simple matter—and before many more minutes had passed they had for ever disposed of the temporary coffin.

From Millery they proceeded to Marseilles, where they ridded themselves of Gouffé's clothes, throwing them into the sea. Then, finding themselves once again short of money, Eyraud borrowed the sum of 500 francs from his brother, and, with unbelievable effrontery, the couple returned to Paris again, where they spent the 18th and 19th of August.

By this time Eyraud's nerve had returned; he was no longer the shivering wretch who had failed to find 14,000 francs. Nevertheless, it is difficult to associate the Eyraud of that night with the Eyraud of the 19th of August who, together with Gabrielle, returned to the room where they had jointly committed so foul a murder in order to recover a hat—Gouffé's hat—which Eyraud had forgotten to take with him.

On the 20th they once more made tracks for London, and eventually the United States, and there for the meanwhile we will leave them and return to Paris and to M. Goron, the famous detective, and then head of the Préfecture de Police.

Goron had not failed to observe the mysterious disappearance of the bailiff Gouffé, but beyond the fact that Gouffé was not unknown for his many *amours* the only outstanding fact he could elucidate was that a visitor had gone up to Gouffé's office the night of the disappearance and there left, as a useless clue, a candle-grease spot. It did not seem that the entry had been made for the purpose of burglary, for if so the thief

would not have left behind the not inconsiderable sum of 14,000 francs. Although Goron cast wide the net of police research, no further light was shed upon the matter, and so, pending further clues, the matter was temporarily shelved.

When in due course the Lyon police reported the finding of a naked corpse in a dense part of a forest near Millery, Goron intuitively connected up the body with that of Gouffé, so, leaving nothing to chance, he sent Inspector Sourdais to inspect the body which had been taken to the Faculty of Medicine. Unfortunately, the head was almost unrecognizable, for the greater part of it had already been consumed by worms, but at any rate there was sufficient to be seen to convince Sourdais that his Chief was on the wrong track.

"Why?" queried M. Goron, when his collaborator returned to the Préfecture.

"Because the hair of the body is black, long and curly. That of Gouffé was, on the contrary, short and auburn.

"Is that all?"

"Practically. Of course the affair has caused quite a sensation, which is emphasized to-day because yesterday at Lyon they were saying that not far from the place where the body has been discovered was found the remains of a trunk. But since there could be no question of our man I left the police of Lyon to solve the matter. It is nothing to do with us."

His more astute Chief was not so easily convinced as the inspector. Despite his inspector, the report of the doctor, and the Parquet of Lyon who laughed at his theories, Goron persisted on linking up the three mysteries—the disappearance of Gouffé, and the two separate discoveries of a corpse, and a rotting trunk—so Goron himself went to Lyon, to find that the body had already been interred. Fortunately the doctor who had made the autopsy was able to produce some hairs, taken from the head of the corpse, pointing out to M. Goron that they were black and long, proving conclusively that they could not have belonged to Gouffé.

Goron examined the hair, then asked for some distilled water. It was brought to him, and into it he put the lock of hair. When pulled out it was short and auburn, cleansed, in fact, of its caking of blood and dirt. On the strength of his findings he demanded a fresh autopsy, with the result

that his theory of the identity of the victim was conclusively verified.

After that his work became more simple, and before the end of the year Goron had skilfully pieced together the murder and even named the murderers, for witnesses had come forward to prove that, at the very time Gouffé had vanished, so had Michael Eyraud and Gabrielle Bompard ; shop assistants came over from London and identified the trunk, and before long the chain was complete. There remained now only to arrest the murderers.

It has already been mentioned that from London the lovers sailed to America. They arrived there comparatively penniless. Money had to be procured, so, disdaining the suggestion of work, the practised criminal Eyraud began once again his life of trickery. He borrowed without paying back, he handled fictitious sales for the sake of the commission, or committed any shady, underhand deal by which he could fill his pockets ; living thus they moved on from town to town until they arrived at San Francisco. Here at last Fate began to take a righteous hand ; Gabrielle fell in love with one of Eyraud's intended victims, a Monsieur Garanger, and only awaiting the first opportunity, she deserted her lover and fled to the waiting arms of M. Garanger.

With her usual skill she spun some sort of a story to her latest, infatuated lover, and either because he believed in her innocence, or because she was desirous of seeing her native country again, they returned to France, and in due course Gabrielle reported herself to the Préfet of Police.

"I am Mademoiselle Gabrielle Bompard !" she said to the clerk.

"Have you an appointment ?" placidly replied the solemn old man around whose neck rattled a silver chain.

"No, but I am Mademoiselle Gabrielle Bompard !"

"Apply for an appointment, and then go home and wait the reply," replied once more this peremptory guardian.

Tenaciously this accomplice of Eyraud returned the following day and finally succeeded in seeing the Préfet, M. Lozé.

With amazing assurance and a familiar manner, which betrayed itself even to the extent of sitting on the Préfet's desk, she told her story. Naturally *she* had had nothing to do with the crime of Eyraud, in fact she had only learned of it

because he had confessed it to her a long while afterward. As soon as she heard of the terrible deed he had committed she left this sinister companion at San Francisco, and was fortunate in finding another and more attractive one, M. Garanger, who had brought her to Paris !

Her latest gallant, thoroughly above-board, and a rich business man of about fifty, having accompanied her, he in turn introduced himself.

After listening with great courtesy to Gabrielle's tale, M. Lozé sent for an inspector of the Préfecture, M. Jaume.

"This occurs fortunately," said the inspector. "I happen to have something for Mademoiselle."

That "something" was a warrant of arrest !

Eyraud's accomplice spent that evening in prison, but quite undismayed she asked the favour that someone should be sent to the Hotel Terminus, where she had been staying with M. Garanger, to fetch her big hat in which she looked so well, so that she might look her best when obliging the photographers.

What little doubt there might have been that Eyraud was guilty of the murder of Gouffé was now erased by Gabrielle's recriminations, so two detectives were sent to the States to effect the arrest of the murderer. However, by reason of the publicity given by the newspapers, Eyraud became acquainted with the fact that human bloodhounds were on his track, that the chase had commenced, and because the detectives' movements were fully reported in the newspapers, presumably as a matter of interest to American readers, he had no difficulty in evading their clutches. This curious pursuit went on for over a month, Eyraud flitting from place to place, leaving behind him a trail of thefts and swindles, debauchery and occasionally admiration—for if some witnesses are to be believed he was a natural actor.

From city to city, from the U.S.A. to Canada, thence back to the States, he twisted and turned until at last the detectives tired of the futility of it, and in March returned to France.

From the States Eyraud travelled South to Mexico, a country with which, of course, he had already a speaking acquaintance, and from there he wrote to the Paris *L'Intransigeant* proclaiming his innocence and denouncing Gabrielle as

the murderess. Detectives were rushed to Mexico, but they were too late. Eyraud had moved again, always travelling South, until he arrived at Havana, Cuba.

Here, through coincidence which even a fiction writer might scorn to use, he was identified by a man who had been employed in the distillery at Sèvres which Eyraud had once owned. Called in by the French Consul, who had been warned that Eyraud was in Cuba, the man was asked to keep an eye open for Eyraud, and, coming out of the Consultate, he met Eyraud face to face. They spent the day together, but when evening approached, and the employee realized that Eyraud was endeavouring to lure him to badly-lit and shadowed streets, he became nervous and hastily made his *adieux*. Two days later Eyraud was arrested early in the morning while patrolling the streets in search of shelter.

Early in June the Spanish authorities handed their prisoner over to the French detectives, and on the 20th he was back in France again. On the 1st of July he made his appearance before the examining magistrate.

The initial move of the police was to confront the two accomplices in the room in which the murder had been committed, for the purpose of reconstructing the crime—and it is interesting to note that among the witnesses present was Sir Melville Macnaghten, then chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard.

It was useless for either of the accused to deny the murder ; at this stage of the game their chief concern seemed to be to cast the onus of the responsibility upon the other—Gabrielle to save her own skin ; Eyraud, indifferent to his own fate, but anxious that his late mistress should share it. Thus, while Gabrielle accused Eyraud not only of the actual deed, but also of the inception, the man stated that the suggestion germinated in Gabrielle's brain ; that it was her hands which had placed the cord round Gouffé's neck.

The trial of Eyraud and Bompard took place before the Paris Assize Court on the 16th of December, 1890, but practically no evidence was offered other than that already described. It was, however, sufficient to secure a verdict of guilt. Eyraud was sentenced to death, Bompard to twenty years' penal servitude.

This, then, was the finish of a pair of cold-hearted, inhuman

scoundrels, but before concluding it is worth while recording one little incident which took place just before the trial ; it does not present a clue as to the—to us—curious psychology of the French people, but rather a hint as to its vagaries, its elusive, indefinable qualities.

All France was ringing with the story of the brutal crime ; there was scarcely a soul who was not discussing the case. M. Goron, just at that moment, decided to take Gabrielle to Millery for the purpose of reconstruction of the crime.

When the public heard of this, from Paris to Millery they flocked along the line, and invaded the stations ; as the prisoner passed they waved and cheered her, saluted her progress as they might a sovereign. She was a heroine ! Further, she remained such to the finish of the trial. During the course of it the Palais de Justice was besieged by crowds eager to be in at the hearing, some even going so far as to pass the night on the pavement ! Some of them were, doubtless, the same people who hooted Gallay and threw flowers at Merelli.

THE MYSTERY OF POWDER B

Murder and Mystery.

VII.—THE MYSTERY OF POWDER B

PIERRE CADIOU

SEPTEMBER 1911 was a month which represented one of the many crises in European affairs ; war clouds were looming ominously, in several countries troops were mobilizing. Judge then the stir caused in France by the following incident, which occurred on the 25th of September.

Dawn, an angry and tempestuous dawn, broke through the barrier of clouds just before five o'clock ; the sky as grey as the ironclads which slumbered off the Petite Rade of Toulon, which represented the French Mediterranean Force, back from manœuvres.

Presently from the flagship *Danton* the chime of six bells resonantly floated through the air, to be immediately echoed by the remainder of the boats. Where before the decks had represented a scene of placidity, instantly everything was changed, for the warships became beehives of bustling commotion. The clarions sent out their shrill call, the drums reverberated their summons ; hammocks were unswung ; personal belongings were folded and neatly placed away ; the men prepared to partake the traditional morning coffee.

So far the dawn of the 25th was in no way different to that of any other day, but suddenly observers from the other ironclads noticed a suspicious animation on the bridge of one of the finest boats, the *Liberté*, and almost at once an alarm-signal was broadcast . . . the *Liberté* was on fire !

From the rest of the squadron boats were lowered and hastily manned ; rowing with all haste they approached the *Liberté*, from which a black cloud of smoke escaped, and from

which also, in a most alarming manner, came, at intervals, the dull reports of heavy detonations. As they approached the vessel the rescuers saw a mass of flames burst from the mizzen mast, and from this they knew that the fire was in the magazine.

Aboard the *Liberté* the quickly-subdued panic became instead a competition of heroism: twice the chief engineer flung himself through the flames in a vain endeavour to open the taps which would have flooded the powder-magazine; after the second attempt he was seen no more. A midshipman refused to leave the post to which he had been ordered; he, too, disappeared.

Before long the fire gained the mastery beyond all hope of ever subduing it; the ship was a complete mass of billowing flames which spread so much that they lit up the harbour with a rich, red glow. Appalled by the disaster, the officer in command—both Captain Jauris, and Joubert, the second-in-command, were on leave—gave the command to lower the boats. He was too late. At exactly 5.35 there was a terrific explosion—the *Liberté* had blown up.

Not alone did the men on the *Liberté* die. The force of the explosion scattered a rain of death-dealing missiles—not only did the small boats hurrying to the rescue suffer a bombardment, but also the surrounding squadron. On the cruiser *Foudre*, nearly two miles away, an officer was killed by a bursting shell. The *Republique* suffered twenty dead and fifty wounded; there were deaths on the *Democratie* and the *Verité*. In fact, the balance-sheet was 220 dead, one battleship demolished, and three *bors de combat*—the Mediterranean squadron amputated by nearly a third!

The news staggered unhappy France; added to the disturbing Agadir incident it was ghastly. Of a sudden all confidence was lost in the Navy. The people recollected that by an unhappy coincidence nine sailors, themselves victims of a similar, but fortunately lesser, tragedy—the spontaneous explosion of a shell on the *Gloire*—were buried on the very day of the *Liberté* tragedy. Moreover, they remembered also the loss of the *Jena* which, four years previously, had disappeared under mysterious circumstances similar in every way to those of the sinister 25th of September.

Finally, from accounts given by survivors, there appeared

to be very little doubt that the *Liberté* disaster was due to the same cause as in the case of the *Jena*—the decomposition of a powder known as "Powder B".

It is history now that for France and some of the other countries which had been preparing for war, the crisis passed. Only Italy and Turkey were embroiled, war between them being declared on the 30th of September. From that day forward French newspapers were full of the war; like so many other mysteries and tragedies the loss of the *Liberté* passed into the graveyard of forgotten events.

Monsieur Nadaud and Pelletier, however, in their book, *Les Morts Mystérieuses*, are not content to leave the matter there but attempt to prove, not without some success, that the sinking of the *Jena* and the *Liberté*, the exploding shell on the *Gloire*, the definite denunciation of Powder B, are indisputably connected with a murder mystery which puzzled France many years later on the eve of the World War, when M. Pierre, Engineer of the Grande-Palud factory, manufacturers of the B Powder, was arrested for the murder of his employer, Monsieur Cadiou.

To comprehend their deductions it is necessary to turn back the pages of time to the year 1903, when Herr Peter Theming of Buhl decided to export pure, blanched cotton to France for the manufacture of gun-cotton.

First of all he began by exporting his *linters*, or blanched waste-cotton, to Brest, offering them to the national powder factories, where the cotton was nitrified and converted into Powder B, capable of shooting shells of 305 kilometres a distance of 18,000 metres.

His plan did not run as smoothly as he anticipated. The French Customs officials demanded certain duties for the import of the *linters*, from which Herr Theming, as a contractor to a French war industry, had thought himself exempt. Far from being discouraged at his plans going awry, he cast about in his mind for other methods of securing a market for his wares. Obviously the thing to be done was to export the cotton and blanch it in France!

It did not take long for Herr Theming to find an ideal spot for his purposes between Landerneau and Brest—a windmill called the Grande-Palud, at the mouth of the River Elorn, and situated conveniently near the Paris-Brest railway. There,

too, the water was fresh and pure, ideal for the blanching of cotton.

All Herr Theming had to do, therefore, was to secure the Grande-Palud, and find a Frenchman to cloak his schemes and behind whom he could shelter. Destiny favoured him; sieur Legrande so interested himself in Herr Theming's patriotic ideals that he offered his services and the Grande-Palud at the same time, and the Grande-Palud was transferred into a powder-factory.

In the meanwhile, acting on the hypothesis that only in Germany was the blanching of cotton really well done, Herr Theming brought from Württemberg an engineer in the person of Herr Greiss (of Stuttgart), captain of the Landwehr.

Before proceeding with the case it would be as well to point out that Messieurs Nadaud and Pelletier did not mince their words or attempt to disguise their suspicions that the formation of the Grande-Palud was political: organized, in fact, from Königergratzerstrasse 70, the headquarters of the German Secret Service. Apart from certain mysterious circumstances which will be disclosed in subsequent pages, they do not reveal the foundations upon which they base their theories, other than to say—referring to enquiries in later years into the reliability of Powder B—"enquiries were made around that organization (the Service des Poudres, and notably the Grande-Palud), the result of which is a secret of the archives (French official records) of which we have cogizance."

With that suspicion dominant, the first results of a research into the formation of the Grande-Palud certainly creates grounds for suspecting that the powder-factory was being worked by invisible wires. Organized by a German, its chief engineer a captain of the German Landwehr! Moreover, a large part of the capital was supplied by Herr Falkemann of Mannheim. Strange, to say the least of it!

However, circumstances which now, in light of subsequent events, are questionable, were not so then, and the factory flourished for some time, until 1909 in fact, but in that year a prudent Under-Secretary of State, M. Henri Cheron, became aware of a scandal in which the Grande-Palud featured, and causing enquiries to be made as to the quality of powder supplied by this factory, realized that the Government was being swindled.

Whereupon, because of "repeated supplies of defective goods, causing our Marines to run the greatest dangers of frauds, collusions and delivery of goods not conforming to samples, etc.", the Grande-Palud was struck from the list of contractors allowed to tender to the Government for a period of three years.

It is interesting to note—and possibly to link up—that decision with the conclusions of the inquest held upon the loss of the *Jena*, for they were practically identical. Is it so beyond all bounds of possibility that the Powder B which was responsible for the *Jena* tragedy came from the Grande-Palud which was proved by Government enquiry to have supplied defective powder? Moreover, do not the opinions of the authors of the French version become confirmed by this report? It would be very much to German interests to have French battleships destroyed every now and again.

At the same time one is hesitant to believe that the German Secret Service could deliberately destroy hundreds of human lives for the sake of one ship, and then again one must not lose sight of the fact that Theming and Greiss might have been mere swindlers—the type of human vampires which exist in every country in the world and care nothing for the rest of humanity so long as they fill their pockets with money—to be classed in the same category as the train-wreckers of the earlier days of the U.S.A. and the ship-wreckers of our own country.

However, upon the Grande-Palud losing the Government contract, Herr Falkemann removed his capital, though both Theming and Greiss remained in the firm, despite the fact that the principal buyer of their powder was lost to them for some years.

In the meantime M. Legrande, to save his face, besieged the Under-Secretary of State, but in spite of all solicitations and prayers the Under-Secretary refused to accept a delivery of 175 tons of powder, the order which had been placed with the suspected factory.

To all intents and purposes, therefore, it was the finish of the undertaking, but Herr Theming was not satisfied to see his organization fade away into liquidation. He approached M. Cloarec, the lawyer who had been responsible for the linking of M. Legrande with Herr Theming.

A complete reorganization was considered necessary, and

M. Cloarec brought on the scene M. Louis Cadiou, who, forced by necessity to sell his solicitor's practice, was in search of a fresh position. Herr Theming soon saw that M. Cadiou was an ideal man for his purpose, because the Frenchman possessed finesse, flexibility, a prudent sense of responsibility, a subtle art of overcoming difficulties, legal and otherwise, and the brilliant polish of a well-informed man.

In March 1909 the Grande-Palud was reorganized by Maître Robert, notary at Landerneau, into a *Société Anonyme** with a capital of 256,500 francs, in 513 shares of 500 francs each, of which the principal subscribers were as follows :

Louis Cadiou ..	.. of Ploujecin ..	81,500
Jean Cadiou ..	.. of Lambellezec ..	12,500
Louis Goge ..	.. of Landivisiau ..	12,500
François Cadiou	.. of Cleder ..	7,500
Mme. Anne Cadiou	.. of „ ..	7,500
Mme. Marie Cadiou	.. of „ ..	7,500
Vve. Richard ..	.. of Morlaix ..	5,000
M. Henri Richard	.. of Landerneau ..	2,500

or a total of 136,500 francs subscribed by Cadiou, Goge and Richard, all relatives. There still remained, however, a balance of 120,500 francs.

Officially, therefore, the factory of the Grande-Palud changed hands, the capital instead of being German became French. But had it? The constitutive act of the society allowed a large margin in this respect. Beside the 120,500 francs of capital without an avowed subscriber, some clauses might certainly appear a little extraordinary.

Notably it was stipulated that the *share certificates* should remain attached until 1914, and could only be detached against a bank security. Further, these bearer certificates entailed, in the case of a sale, transfer costs, as though they were nominal share certificates.

The truth is that behind Cadiou, just as behind Legrande, Theming was hiding himself. Moreover, Herr Theming reserved for himself the right to supply the factory with *linters*, which netted him a premium of ten per cent. *ad valorem*

*An undertaking trading under a registered name and concealing the names of the directors.

from the Reich. Since the Grande-Palud benefited by the ten per cent. it could, therefore, offer the State, her principal client, lower prices than her competitors, and so for the second time Herr Peter Theming achieved his ends, from which it must be concluded that the reorganized Grande-Palud was again appointed contractor to the Government.

In the meantime the presence of Herr Greiss at the factory had become impossible, and it was decided to put a Frenchman in his place. The Grande-Palud approached the *Amicale des Arts et Manufactures*, who quickly supplied the demand, and on the 19th of March, 1909, a tall boy of the name of Pierre entered as assistant engineer to the factory.

During the next four years the manufactory must have prospered, because according to M. Mennessier, special commissioner, Cadiou was able to pay Theming, during the summer of 1913, 165,000 francs. On the other hand, the enquiry showed that the end of that same year a further deposit of 100,000 francs had been made for the same purpose in a large Parisian bank, which makes a total of 265,000 francs subscribed by the Cadious, a sum slightly larger than the sum total of the society's capital. The difference seems to represent the various costs of deeds, registering, etc.

All this is very extraordinary. In the first case the fact that the share certificates should remain attached until 1914, and were presumably held by Herr Theming, would suggest that the Cadious' money was a myth: that the capital was that of Theming, put up in the name of the Cadious family to disguise the source of the capital. In order that any of the Cadious should not sell the certificates, legally theirs to do so if they so desired, he had made the extraordinary stipulation that the certificates were not to be detached until 1914.

This seems to be confirmed by the fact that in 1913 Cadiou paid to Theming the equivalent of the capital of the firm in order to buy him (Theming) out. It seems improbable that, otherwise, Cadiou would have paid the German 265,000 francs for Theming's presumed share of 120,000 francs. As to how Cadiou raised the 265,000 francs to complete this deal, one must conclude that he made this out of the profits of the previous four years.

At this point it seems that the theory of Theming's being a spy in the service of the German Secret Service fails to hold

water. If he had established the Grande-Palud as a means of supplying inferior gunpowder to the French State in the hope of creating material damage—which did happen, intentionally or otherwise—why did he sell out at the end of 1913? There seems little doubt that having made his money he thought fit to retire—if Cadiou made 265,000 francs in four years *as a presumably moneyless partner*, how much did Theming make? It can almost be taken for granted that Theming was merely a Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford, and from that moment, from the 27th of December, 1913, he retired into the background, having gained his objective—money.

Evidently it was known that Theming was clearing out, for on the day after he did so, that is, the 28th, Cadiou was approached by a German group pleading to buy the Grande-Palud. The Frenchman was not anxious, so he asked for the sum of 450,000 francs, which amount was surely the equivalent of a negative reply. On 30th December Cadiou disappeared, and so began the mystery of Louis Cadiou.

On the 31st Mme. Cadiou who lived in Paris at 91bis, rue du Cherche-Midi, began to feel somewhat anxious. Her husband had promised to return to the bosom of his family the day before, and many important wires awaited him, which, apart from any other circumstances, confirmed his intention to spend the new year in Paris. At last she could stand the anxiety no longer, so she telegraphed him at the Grande-Palud, but there was no reply. She next got in touch with M. Pierre, the engineer, but he reported that he had not seen his employer since the 29th.

On the first day of the new year Mme. Cadiou, thoroughly anxious, persuaded M. Cloarec, the lawyer, to wire the secretary of the Mairie of Landerneau, to receive in reply the following message :

“Cadiou left Morlaix last Tuesday with package.”

About the same time a letter arrived for Cadiou, which she opened. It was from Pierre, and dated 2 o'clock, 30th of December, from Landerneau. Here is an extract :

“You forgot, when leaving, to give the cash department instructions to let me have money. We have not paid the

workmen, and I have some personal accounts to settle. Please let me have 2,000 francs."

Still no news ! The following day a second letter arrived from Pierre :

"I have thought over the question which you put before me, dismissing the workmen. . . ."

So passed the first days of 1914, full of misery for the unhappy family. Meanwhile the Parquet of Brest took the matter up, as did the Préfet of Finistère. Special police were requisitioned and detailed to find the missing man.

On the 11th of January the Press began to notice the disappearance, with the release of the news to the public, the gossipmongers of the cafés and the boulevards began to circulate rumours, all of them diverse and contradictory.

While some affirmed that Cadiou was a spy, an ostensible agent of German industrials, who had disappeared because the Grande-Palud was again being removed from official contracts, others maintained that it was a case of suicide, an affair of the heart. To support their theories these latter quoted the finding at Brest of a body of a young typist, and did not hesitate to connect up the one case with the other.

The wiser ones believed that a greater crime had been committed, and gradually this presumption became more general. The *juge d'instruction*, Monsieur Bidart de la Noë, began to be inundated with denunciations and imprecations, most of them ridiculous, like one which read :

"I can tell you the perpetrators of the crime. They are a deputy, a *juge de paix*, a player of the clarinet, and two masked women, one of whom is thirty-three years old."

The writer only needed to have added that the other one had a wart on her thumb to suggest that he had been reading Gaboriau well but not wisely.

The search continued, and in accordance with French legal methods an *enquête*, which to a certain extent corresponds to our inquests, was opened on Cadiou's disappearance. The result of this was to establish Cadiou's love for his wife, which seemed thoroughly to dispose of any outside intrigue, and the

existence in the bank of 100,000 francs on current account at Brest, and 10,000 francs at Paris, which effectively negated all suggestions of ruination or bankruptcy.

On the morning of the 3rd February, M. Bidart de la Noë was warned over the telephone by Jean-Marie Cadiou, brother of the missing man, that he had found Louis' body near the Grande-Palud. The *juge* jumped into a carriage, and collecting M. Guillemard, Procureur of the Republic, and some gendarmes, set out for the Grande-Palud, arriving there a little before midday.

As soon as the introduction had been made, Jean-Marie Cadiou, looking pale and haggard, showed M. Bidart de la Noë a letter, saying it was from a relative, Mme. Sainby, at Pont-à-Mousson, whose daughter married the brother of Mme. Pierre Cadiou, detailing where the body of Louis might be found.

The *juge* was naturally curious as to how such a revelation could be possible, and was informed that she had been told by a seer of Nancy.

M. Bidart de la Noë was incredulous.

"But I tell you that I have found it," said the other.

"Where?"

"Five hundred yards off."

"Let us start, then; you can tell me the rest as we go along."

"Well," explained M. Cadiou, as the little group passed under the bridge of the Brest railway in order to remount the River Elorn, "I received this letter yesterday morning. Mme. Sainby tells me in it that she went to consult a clairvoyante of Nancy, a Mme. Camille, and she, while deep in a hypnotic sleep, said:

"Monsieur Cadiou has been murdered. The murderer is tall, auburn, bearded. He is thirty to thirty-five years old. He was helped by someone else who kept watch.

"A trap had been laid for M. Cadiou, he tripped over a cord and fell; once on the ground he was severely struck on the right side of his head, and then in the back; but the last blow was useless, the first had already killed him.

"The crime was committed towards four or five o'clock. It is useless to search for the body of M. Cadiou in the water. It will not be found there. He is to the right of a windmill,

at the foot of a slope near a little wood or copse of trees. A little earth covers him. He will be discovered and the murderer caught.' ”

“And did you believe it ?” asked the judge.

“Not right away. But during the afternoon I received a wire from Mme. Sainby telling me to follow up the clue of the seer. So I followed the canal of the windmill on the left bank. I walked three hundred metres, sounding the ground with my walking-stick. Nothing. I believed it useless to continue. There is quite a lot of hunting round there, wild boar and woodstock. If there had been anything there the dogs would have discovered it.

“All the same, arriving at the corner of a footpath and the canal, in a cul-de-sac hidden by the branches, I jammed my stick in. It struck a hard substance. I scratched ; a bit of material appeared and then a corpse. It is my brother—I am sure it is my brother.”

They arrived at the sinister tomb. To the little group were added the factory workers, the foreman Bignard, the engineer Pierre. In the trees of the ravine, leafless through the winter winds, and alongside the noisy water of the stream swollen by rain, the macabre task was quickly carried on. The corpse of a man smeared with a foul covering of mud appeared.

Pierre helped the diggers, but, disdaining all tools, disengaged the corpse with his hands.

Under the cold light filtering through the trees, the funereal remains were placed on a stretcher, and it was observed that the cycling costume which clothed them was covered with mire, that at the feet was a waterproof capuchon.

Silently the mortuary cortège carried its horrible burden back to the Grande-Palud. The voice from above had not lied. From the locked room in Nancy, 1,000 kilos from Brest, the clairvoyante had really seen in the mire of the Breton forest the murdered body of M. Cadiou.

The body was placed in a dark shed, where only a vague daylight entered from a small, dusty casement. Then, for some unknown reason, the Parquet decided to have the autopsy performed immediately, and a doctor was instructed to trace out the cause of death.

These instructions were given despite the fact that there was not sufficient light to facilitate accurate observations, nor

was there a dissecting table, and, what was still worse, there were no surgical instruments, the doctor not having his case of instruments ready.

Asked if it were possible for him to proceed, he shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't really matter ; any sharp instrument will do."

Timidly a witness, a neighbouring farmer, suggested : "I have a *secateur*" (pruning shears).

"Excellent, that will do," replied the doctor, and so the autopsy commenced, and after some difficulty Doctor Rousseau succeeded in laying open the victim's neck.

His diagnosis of the cause of death differed to that of the clairvoyante, for on the left side of the skull appeared an injury caused by some blunt instrument, while a horrible wound stretched from the shoulder to the larynx of the throat. There seemed no doubt that the unfortunate man had been knocked down and his throat cut.

The magistrates present consulted one another. Then presently M. Bidart de la Noë stepped forward toward Pierre, and placing a hand on his shoulders, exclaimed, "M. Pierre, I place you under arrest."

While this sudden move was undoubtedly a surprise to Pierre, it seemed that the Cadiou family and even some of the factory workers were expecting it ; some of them, in fact, had already suggested it. M. Jean-Marie Cadiou had already formally accused the engineer.

Nevertheless, so far, apart from vaguely circumstantial evidence, there was no direct proof that Pierre was a murderer, and it almost appears that the *juge d'instruction* in charge of the case might have wished to be in possession of more definite clues before taking such a hasty step, but throughout this case M. Bidart de la Noë acted in a manner far from being consistent with what should have been his rôle.

A first domiciliary search at the engineer's house permitted the perspicacity of the *instruction* to discover that Pierre possessed a pickaxe, to which some hairs were adhering, a knife with a bill-hook blade, and a mistress, who was none other than Julia Juzeau, his servant.

It was subsequently discovered that the hairs were cat's hairs, the knife-blade was as clean as a whistle ; as for the

fact of having kitchen love affairs—this did not necessarily entail assassination !

There was, however, one grave point which told against the engineer. He pretended to have seen M. Cadiou for the last time on 29th December. The *instruction* established the fact that the *femme de ménage* of the industrial had seen the victim in Landerneau on the 30th—it will be remembered that Pierre lived in Landerneau !

“After all,” replied the engineer, “I might quite well have seen M. Cadiou on the thirtieth ; it is possible that my memory is at fault, but all that does not prove that I killed him.”

“Naturally,” replied M. Bidart de la Noë, “but you have forgotten that at two o’clock on the 30th of December you wrote to M. Cadiou. If you had seen him that morning, it was only to create an alibi for yourself.”

The *juge’s* theory was unjust. M. Cadiou had left M. Pierre about 11.30. The letter was dated the same day, two o’clock. It is quite possible to assume that, his patron scarcely out of sight, the engineer remembered the money needs of the factory, and had not wished to put off advising him.

On the other hand, one would have to suppose that the last person to have seen M. Cadiou left him on the 30th of December before midday, yet several witnesses came forward to contradict this theory, even though it were very necessary to the prosecution.

“I saw M. Cadiou at the station of Morlaix, the 31st, at sixteen thirty-five o’clock,” declared M. Nicholas, judge of the tribunal of Commerce de Brest.

“I called to M. Cadiou, who replied to me,” said M. Prigent. “It was the 31st of December ; the proof is that I was at my window.”

“It is quite true,” affirmed Mme. Prigent, “but it was the 1st of January.”

Among one, two or three witnesses who are mistaken, there surely might be one telling the truth.

Unfortunately, a document found in Pierre’s waste-paper basket seemed to compromise him. It was rolled into a ball, and was an acknowledgment of the receipt, by the Minister of War, of a letter containing some very definite denunciations as to some suspicious traffickings of Cadiou.

In 1910, in particular, the magnate caused himself to be paid twice by the Poudrerie d'Angoulême for a wagon-load of cotton delivered under the name of the firm Potel, then passed in writing to the account of Cadiou. More serious still, he delivered to the State some disguised, mouldy cottons, in such a state that, once transformed, the result could only be an unstable powder.

"It is bad cotton? Give it to the State," said he. "Keep the good for our private clientele."

The result of these denunciations would have been to refuse the firm of Cadiou permission to take part in tendering for the December contracts.

Obviously, this did not show up Pierre in a very good light. But, even so, he could argue in his favour that it was necessary for him, bound as he was by contract, to ease his conscience and to prevent his being of harm to the national defence. Further, had he not had it out with Cadiou, during the preceding summer, in a heated discussion, which had helped to part the two men?

M. Bidart de la Noë was not satisfied.

"If you killed your patron, it is because the terms of your contract forbid you for seventeen years to work in a similar factory, for instance, M. Roches, of Daoulas."

"Pardon. I was in communication with a rival firm and M. Cadiou declared himself ready to set me free."

Pierre might have added that the fact of killing M. Cadiou did not in any way cancel the terms of his contract!

"And, in actual fact, did you not covet his place?"

"Take up the management of a discredited factory? Thanks! Besides, my family had found a job for me at Nantes. And then was I not about to enter the employment of a rival, with the acquiescence of M. Cadiou, though on the 12th of January, in face of the continued absence of my patron, I preferred to break off negotiations?"

For the time being the *juge d'instruction* was not in a position to press forward with his theories, so, as the autopsy with secateurs had not received the reception that its originality deserved, it was decided to open a second autopsy, which took place at Morlaix on 17th of February; this time it was entrusted to an authority, Doctor Paul.

Doctor Paul kept on his round curved hat, put on his big

white blouse and shut himself up with the corpse. He came out, a scalpel in one hand, a little ingot of metal in the other, and said simply :

“Messieurs, M. Cadiou was killed.”

“That much is known.”

“Yes—but by a revolver bullet in the nape of the neck. The throat-cutting was simulated. More likely the assassin tried to find and destroy this piece of conviction.”

This piece of conviction was a revolver bullet, calibre 6 mm., with four grooves ! Having produced one piece of startling evidence, Doctor Paul next proceeded to reveal another by displaying an anonymous letter sent to him from Quimper on the 15th, an extract of which is quoted below. Writing of the previous inquest the writer said :

“Rightly or wrongly, the *médecin légiste* must have proceeded by elimination, thus have shaved the head of the victim, looked for the ecchymosis, dissected, washed the skin of the skull to find the sanguinary effusion and followed this to the point which determines death due to battering. In the first place the *médecin légiste* does not appear to have taken sufficient count of the section of the neck, of its character, its nature, its action. . . .

“It does not appear to have been certain nor to have been established whether this wound was ante- or post-mortem, whether it had effected the corresponding ‘carotide’ (i.e. either of the principal arteries which carry the blood from the heart to the head) and caused firstly hæmorrhage and then death.

“Was the corpse bloodless ? Was the wound superficial or deep ? Did he examine it, dissect it ? Did the wound indicate a bleeding while alive or an attempt after death ? In the second case, the cutting would yield no result, and the wound had only been done in ignorance of its negative effect, or else *with a knowledge of the facts and to hinder all research* by drawing attention to this point.

“*As for explaining, as the médecin légiste is doing at this moment, that this unilateral wound was done with the object of masking strangulation with a serviette, this is not admissible.*

"In other words, Cadiou died neither by strangulation nor by throat-cutting. Examine the base of the neck. All the rest is so much camouflage."

So much for that ! To the *juge* it was another link in the chain against Pierre, and when that unhappy person pleaded to be released on bail, M. Bidart de la Noë merely reiterated monotonously :

"You killed Cadiou with your revolver ?"

"It is true I did have a revolver. But I sold it to a passing commercial traveller a year and a half ago."

"You killed Cadiou ?"

"But the witnesses 'against me' (i.e. for the prosecution) contradict one another and retract."

". . . with your revolver——"

"But you give credence to idle talk, soon proved false, like that of the workman Bossard."

". . . with your revolver——"

"But why do you delay having the bullet examined by an expert ; it has been in your drawer for the last forty, fifty, or *sixty* days ?"

"You killed Cadiou——"

Not until the 26th of April did M. Bidart de la Noë decide to send the principal exhibit of the prosecution—the bullet—to M. Grivolas, an expert armourer of St. Etienne. From 17th of January to the 26th of April ! It must be admitted that, to the *juge d'instruction* of Brest, time was no object !

Nothing could shake the magistrate's faith in his first theory, neither the lack of motive for the crime, nor the contradictions of witnesses, nor the various statements of experts.

"Obviously, M. Cadiou was assassinated," said Doctor Paul. "But was his throat cut before or after death ? Did Pierre kill him ? It is impossible to say one way or the other."

"In any case," said M. Kohn-Abrest, who examined the clothes, knife and pickaxe of the engineer, "one fact is incontestable. M. Cadiou bled abundantly. Now there is not the least trace of blood on the objects I have examined. Beside, there is not the slightest doubt that the victim's throat was cut before death."

"As for the bullet," said M. Grivolas, "it is very similar to those sold to Pierre by the armourer Marie, of Morlaix. Was it shot by Pierre's revolver? In this respect I lack means of comparison. We find nothing in the pieces of conviction that might throw a little light or furnish an absolute proof."

Doubts, doubts, doubts all along the line. In the end, and after more than three months, despite his convictions, M. Bidart de la Noë decided to grant bail to Pierre.

Even though public opinion had finally obtained satisfaction, not so M. Bidart de la Noë, and on the 13th of July he had Pierre sent before the Assizes of Finistère charged with voluntary homicide and "recel" (i.e. receiving of stolen goods) of the body.

Then the war-clouds gathered in the East. Before many more weeks passed the storm broke and Europe was plunged into the maelstrom of war. The Assizes of Finistère thought a live soldier was of more use to the country than a dead murderer, so Pierre was released to fight in the Army.

During the War he served in the 13th Artillery, acting with splendid heroism. During that time, too, he regularized his union with the little servant, Julia Juzeau, being married to her in 1916 before the Mayor and the Curé.

By the grace of God he lived through the cataclysm, and a grateful country saluted him—then asked him to surrender himself to justice for the murder of Louis Cadiou!

On the 27th of October, 1919, Pierre was tried before the Quimper Assizes, in the Palais de Justice of Quimper. The accused entered, tall, robust, clothed in grey, his "regate" (i.e. a tie very similar to that of a sailor) well knotted round a collar with turned-down corners, his spectacles hardly veiling the shyness of his look. His awkwardness itself pleaded in his favour, for he did not have the look of a man capable of killing anyone.

The early hours of the trial produced a crop of sensations, the first of which was sprung upon the court by counsel for the defence, the famous Maître Henri-Robert, who demanded that a witness of the name of Tonnard should be called.

Tonnard appeared—he was a man of about forty-five years of age, employed in the carpentry trade. So startling was his evidence that it was soon realized that if the jury thought fit to believe it, Pierre would soon be a free man again.

In clear tones Tonnard related his story of one day in the last week of December 1913. He was walking to Brest, he told the Court, to search for work, when he saw M. Cadiou, whom he knew, driving a trap. Recognizing the workman, M. Cadiou slowed down and offered him a lift, which he was glad enough to accept. Later they stopped at an estaminet and had a drink, after which they continued the drive. Suddenly, as they were going along, six men sprang out into the road, two of whom seized the horse's bridle, while another, a Corsican by the name of Phillippi, fired with a revolver at M. Cadiou, who collapsed.

One member of the gang, who wore a hood entirely covering his face, then climbed into the trap and proceeded to chloroform Tonnard. When he recovered consciousness it was to find himself in a small house inhabited by M. Cadiou's sister. His workman's clothes had been removed and replaced by a new suit, in the pockets of which he found £800 in gold. He escaped from the house, but fearful for his own safety, he left the neighbourhood. Subsequently he was married, but still nervous, he ran away to sea. For some time he remained a sailor, but later worked in a dockyard. Here he was discovered by the bandits and threatened with death if he should ever reveal his secret.

Such was Tonnard's amazing story, and the effect of it was not lessened by the police reporting on Tonnard's record, which was in every way excellent.

In a sense the trial was a farce, though to Pierre its five sittings were five days of agony; for those best qualified to wake the past did not present themselves at the bar. Deputy Cloarec was dead. Legrande, former owner of Grande-Palud, a cloak for the sleeping partners Theming and Falke-mann, presented to the President of the Assizes a medical certificate attesting the impossibility, from where he was, of bringing his testimony before the jury.

The clairvoyante of Nancy appeared. *But no one thought to ask who had inspired her*, while her deposition allowed the President to make wit rather than light. As for the Avocat-General, *he forgot to make the least allusion to the mysterious doctor*, author of the anonymous letter addressed to Doctor Paul, who undoubtedly knew when, where, and how the drama was enacted.

The prosecution said : M. Cadiou died the 30th of December, 1913, at Landerneau, and that Pierre killed him, but witnesses worthy of credence, stated that on the 30th and 31st of December, 1913, the 1st of January, 1914, M. Cadiou was at Morlaix, or at Saint-Pol-de-Leon, 40 kilometres from the place where he was killed ; that is two days after the date the prosecution stated Cadiou was killed.

Throughout the trial Pierre remained calm and passive, even in face of the bias which the judge seemed to bear against him, and which gave rise to many remarks which, emanating from the judicial bench as they did, revealed the President of the Court as a disgrace to his learned calling and utterly unworthy of that honour.

For instance, as has already been stated, Pierre had bad eyesight. This caused him to look sideways to see clearly. This habit made the judge remark that "the accused was unable to look anyone in the face"—a cruel and heartless remark even for a French judge, though of course French judges are permitted a far greater latitude than is the case over here.

A statement that Pierre had once killed a cat was another excellent opening for levity. "I should not be at all surprised if you were a brute," said the President to Pierre.

Maître Robert intervened, and there was a stirring scene when he rightly called the judge to order.

However, even without Tonnard's evidence, which one must admit smacks rather of Lyceum melodrama, the prosecution could not prove their case, and an acquittal became obvious. On the 31st of October, 1919, the jury of Finistère confirmed common sense. The engineer Pierre, to the accompaniment of the crowd's cheers, was exonerated from the terrible accusation which had hung over him for seventy months.

As Pierre did not murder Cadiou, who, then, did so ? This question is never likely to be answered now, but concerning it Messieurs Nadaud and Pelletier have some interesting observations to make, and in appending them it is informative to note that in their version of the trial they do not introduce any mention of Tonnard.

It must be remembered that on the day before his death, and the day after his purchase outright of the Grande-Palud,

M. Cadiou had been approached by a German group desirous of purchasing the cotton-blanching factory. But the price asked by M. Cadiou—450,000 francs—was in itself a negative answer. M. Cadiou at heart did not wish to sell. The group did not despair. They must have the factory at all costs. Its owner disappeared ; would there not be a sale ?

M. Cadiou, it has been established, instead of going straight to Paris, stopped at Morlaix. He remained there 48 hours, then went to Saint-Pol-de-Leon. He was seen wandering along, awaiting the realization of a rendezvous, the coming of people who deferred and delayed, endeavouring to tire the game, drown the fish.

During the last interview Cadiou, keeping his jealously guarded secret, letting no one know—for a good reason—his financial contrivances, refused to modify his demands. Consequently there was a revolver shot point blank from behind, and as he still breathed, his throat was cut. The body was concealed for some time in the thickets of Leonnois, but a certain panic was created by the first researches, for people talked a lot too much of German intimacies, old and new, of the Grande-Palud. Supposing two birds were killed with one stone ? Supposing one at the same time got rid of the French engineer, that nuisance whom the factory, under contract, was forced to endure his surveillance for another two years, and Cadiou, the owner of the factory !

So one night the compromising corpse was brought, by car, nearer Pierre and his factory. It was buried. When the macabre tableau was set, anonymous letters were sent round among the family and intimates, until it was arranged that the corpse should be discovered. They relied on the distrust, innate in every Breton, of all strangers, whether of France or abroad, who came to work in their country.

Pierre arrested, the rest was left to pan out on its own. The ineffable M. Bidart de la Noë held his culprit, and did not think of seeking elsewhere.

He took no account of facts. Between the discovery of the corpse and the second autopsy, that of Doctor Paul, he did not even think of examining the garments of Cadiou.

If he had proceeded to do this seemingly obvious thing he would have seen that the hood of the mackintosh cloak capuchon had a bullet-hole at the back. The anonymous

letter of the enigmatic doctor was necessary to help the justice not only to see more clearly but also to open his eyes.

This doctor! The *juge* did not seek him *even though all Brittany murmured his name*. The clairvoyante! M. Bidart de la Noë was satisfied with tricky replies from this seer who practised at three francs the séance. He omitted to search the books of the armourer Marie for the purchasers of revolvers similar to the one which killed Cadiou. In other words, he was a cockchafer buzzing in a lamp-glass, and, thanks to this *juge d'instruction*, the real criminals escaped suspicion.

Up to this point the writers have certainly drawn their conclusions very clearly, and their theories are well within the bounds of possibility. Nevertheless, still with the thought of Königergratzerstrasse 70 at the back of their minds, they continue by asking whether the German group reputed to be endeavouring to purchase the Grande-Palud profited by their crime.

"No," they say, "for they had not reckoned upon the revelations coming from all sides, of the suspicious origins of the factory. If they had openly attempted to re-buy it, public opinion would have prevented it. They were obliged to throw up the sponge, with this shred of consolation, that the largest factory of cotton-blanching saw its production at a standstill during the seven months immediately preceding the War.

"And yet what a fine stake. Only a few metres from the factory the viaduct of the main line Paris-Brest rises over the ravine of Elorn; it is a vital artery of the Peninsular. After having manufactured, almost under its columns, cotton which was to blow up French ironclads, the viaduct was to be blown up in its turn, but with good powder, the first day of mobilization. Brest would have been cut off from the rest of France, our first naval base of the Atlantic rendered *hors de combat* without a blow having been struck. This failed. But the powers of darkness who had elaborated it had not entirely wasted their time during the ten years which, under varying disguises, it had operated in France. The lost ironclads, the hundreds of phantoms of our sailors, drowned, mangled and asphyxiated, are unavenged witnesses of it, not to mention the profaned corpse of the unhappy Cadiou and the martyrdom, lasting five years, which the

engineer Pierre endured. And yet how necessary should it have been to know the truth. Outside the duty of avenging public morals, justice has also this duty, not less important, to protect society and in this way to ensure the well-being of the country. Firmly handled, the abscess of 1913 might have enabled us to shelter our war factories from all German menace. Through a *juge d'instruction's* bungling, through a blind parquet's obstinacy, *the real culprits were able to escape*; stronger now because of a precious experience which allowed them henceforward better to contrive their crimes.

"Did the lesson of 1914 strike home? Does there still exist a Grande-Palud manufacturing unsound cotton, which will entirely destroy the last remaining débris of our naval marine?"

With that question they write "finis". How near are they to the truth? Personally the very fact, as mentioned before, of Herr Theming relinquishing his holding of the Grande-Palud, is sufficient evidence to the contrary. What would have been the object of the German Secret Service in instructing Theming to sell to Cadiou only to have to buy it back again?

At the same time, what of the *Jena* and the *Liberté*? Both of these ships disappeared during the time the Grande-Palud was turning out Powder B, and according to experts the loss of the two boats was definitely put down to the inferiority of Powder B. We know, too, that twice the Grande-Palud was struck off the list of tenders for supplying bad powder. Is it so unlikely that the phantom of many sailors haunt the Grande-Palud?

Let us now review the trial, taking into consideration the evidence of the carpenter, Tonnard. Even if we discount the greater proportion of the more lurid details, his story amply confirms the theories of Messieurs Nadaud and Pelletier in that Cadiou was waylaid and murdered on the way to meet the German group.

Obviously the motive of the crime was murder alone. Had it been robbery it does not seem likely that the robbers would have given away to Tonnard £800 in gold, or even £8, which somehow seems more like the sum which would have been deemed sufficient to keep Tonnard's mouth closed.

The fact that one of the gang was in a hood, while the

rest were careless of recognition, conveys a suggestion that the one who masked his face was desirous to maintain secrecy not only in respect of the victim but also of the gang ; more evidence that someone not actually a professional criminal was behind the murder.

Taking one point into consideration with another, it certainly appears quite obvious that Pierre was an innocent catpaw, while it is not unlikely that the German group were, indeed, the prime instigators of the crime. Nevertheless, this mystery will remain shrouded in uncertainty for all time now, unless one future day brings into being a confession which will throw rather more light on the mystery.

LA BELLE LISON

Passion.

VIII.—LA BELLE LISON

NAVAL LIEUTENANT ULLMO

[The mysterious messages from "Paul to Pierre" and from "Pierre to Paul", which until now have been hidden in French official archives, are only revealed to the British public for the first time in these pages, and are completely unedited except for such alterations which render the process of the translation more smooth.]

ON the 10th of September, 1907, M. Thomson, the French Minister of the Marine, received the following typewritten letter, posted from Toulon :

"I possess a stereotype of the following secret documents—

" (i) Secret Code and instructions.

" (ii) Signals of recognition, secret pictures and words.

" (iii) Safety entrance channels to the ports.

"I address myself to you before going to a foreign country ; I will deliver to you this unique stereotype which I possess and give you first refusal.

"I want 150,000 francs. If the price seems to you too large, make me a definite proposal. Insert in the personal column of the *Journal* as soon as possible the following note—

" 'Paul to Pierre—accept price demanded—or name price.'

"I will write to you arranging exchange of goods for money in notes of 1,000 francs. If I have no answer in eight days I will sell to another country and you will have to change your whole system of cipher, which will cost you more time and money. Be sure that I will not keep back one copy. As proof, I am able to give you the second secret word."

As a final point, this anonymous correspondent proved that he knew this ultra secret detail.

Naturally the affair was of supreme importance. The *Sûreté Générale*, being warned of the audacious proposition, charged Monsieur Sebille, principal Commissaire, to open an immediate enquiry, so on the 13th of September he inserted in the *Journal* the following announcement :

“Accept your proposal—price to be discussed.”

An answer to this was not long forthcoming. On the 16th of September there came to the Minister another anonymous letter, bearing for the second time the postmark of Toulon :

“Monsieur, I have read your announcement to-day. I now ask you to insert another, saying : ‘Paul to Pierre—my last (or highest) price is so much.’ Please realize that I will not accept a price differing greatly from the one I quoted, which was 150,000 francs, and that, even at that price, it is in your interests.”

The following Thursday M. Sebille responded in the manner indicated :

“Paul to Pierre—before fixing price, shall need to prove conclusively that you have the goods.”

On the 21st of September he received a further letter :

“I send you as proof, six of my undeveloped stereotypes ; two by document.

“Develop these stereotypes, and you will be convinced. I am in a hurry. My last price is 150,000 francs. Insert on Monday morning : ‘Paul to Pierre—accept price and mode of delivery proposed.’

“When the stereotypes are developed, insert, by Wednesday morning at the latest : ‘Paul to Pierre—I leave 9 o’clock at night on such a date, Friday or Saturday.’ ”

Shortly after this letter there arrived for the Minister of Marine an envelopé enclosing a packet, wrapped in a sheet of pale-green paper. On it was the following inscription in typewritten characters :

“Open in a dark room only ; the stereotypes are not developed. I have put only one of the signals, so as not to deprive myself of pictures that are of great importance. Therefore five instead of six.”

The developments and enlargements produced results which left no doubt as to the value of the documents. On the 29th of September M. Seville caused to be inserted the following :

“Paul to Pierre—Merchandise of good quality. Am much disposed to give price asked.

“Before suggesting new date for exchange, insist still more that you find means to augment your guarantee.”

The answer to this letter was as follows :

“To give you guarantee, I will proceed in the following manner. I count this time on you without delay. Go alone with the 150,000 francs, Monday night 9.20 train for Toulon. At Toulon, toward one o'clock, go and fetch a Poste Restante letter addressed to M.R.P. 349, which will fix the rendezvous. To mark your presence on the train, when entering the station at Toulon, wave your handkerchief at the window of your carriage, until the train completely stops.”

This communication did not reach the Minister of Marine until the morning of the 1st of October. The same evening, Lieutenant Chardon caught the “Rapide” at two o'clock. He arrived at Toulon on the morrow at 11 o'clock. Keeping strictly to his instructions, he waved a white handkerchief, exposing himself as much as possible from the time the train entered the station until it had completely stopped ; then went straight to the Grande Hotel, without remarking anything unusual.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, he took from the Poste Restante a letter addressed M.R.P. 349. These are the contents :

“Take the ‘Rapide’ at 6 o'clock for Paris. While passing La Coitat, visit one of the lavatories. In one of these, either in the cupboard or on the basin, you will find the package underneath an envelope marked M.R.P.

“Place in the same envelope the one hundred and fifty thousand francs in notes and then replace the envelope when the train stops at Marseilles. Then go to the buffet and dine for three-quarters of an hour without keeping watch. You shall receive the other stereotypes in Paris, twenty-four hours afterward without fail.”

In consequence of this latest development the lieutenant boarded the six o'clock train as arranged.

While passing through La Ciotat, he visited the lavatories of three carriages and found in the cupboard of one of them a packet consisting of one whitish-brown envelope, with a rubber band round it, upon which was written twice, in type, the inscription “M.R.P.” Within the envelope was a note, also typewritten :

“I say again, have confidence, and you will never have cause to regret it. I have not hesitated to deliver to you without guarantee, these 18 stereotypes. Therefore I count upon you to place the 150,000 francs in the envelope without fear ; within twenty-four hours you will receive the rest at Paris.

“Modification—instead of waiting until you reach Marseilles to replace the envelope with the notes, do so while passing Aubagne, eighteen minutes after La Ciotat. Keep no watch on the lavatory ; neither yourself, nor anybody else, either from near by or from far off.”

In the meantime the naval man had dispersed in different parts of the train a number of agents of the Sûreté, or, in other words, detectives. To two of them he gave orders to occupy the lavatory in rotation.

The train stopped a little distance from the station. The

Commissaire Lestrille, who occupied the lavatory, believing he had arrived at the station, came out a few moments before the train actually stopped, but nobody appeared at that moment. As soon as the train had actually stopped the lieutenant quickly shut himself in the lavatory, put the envelope in the place indicated, and coming out, went directly to the buffet. Hardly had he placed his feet on the platform when a passenger immediately hurried into the lavatory, and proceeded to shut himself within.

The police officers exchanged winks of triumph. Their game was cooked! As the man came out strong arms drew him before the Commissaire.

Hélas! they were mistaken! The passenger they had stopped proved to be a French Consul in a southern town in Russia. Moreover, the envelope placed by M. Chadron on the basin of the lavatory was intact.

Deeply chagrined, the Minister believed the whole affair to be compromised, but there came to the Minister the following letter dated the 3rd of October :

“You have wished for guarantees. I have given them to you, and I regret it. A little before Arles, I entered the lavatory and found nothing. You will receive on Saturday morning, the 6th, precise instructions. Follow them to the letter, or you will regret it. Failing the delivery of the monies, a serious event will happen against the Ministry of the Marine and against yourself. I guarantee my silence, as soon as I receive the 150,000 francs, of which I have need. To show me that you subscribe to my conditions, telegraph on Wednesday, 2 R.P. Poste Restante, Toulon. ‘I accept.’ Nothing more!”

About this time the affair became somewhat muddled, owing to the delay in the transmission of correspondence, so that nothing of real value transpired until the 14th of October, when M. Thomson received the following letter-card :

“Will you give your word of honour that your agent will come alone unarmed to the meeting place, and that I shall not need fear either being arrested or followed? For the rest, if I should be arrested, two hours afterward

vengeance would be taken on your daughter. Be, then, warned and keep your word. You can be quite sure I shall keep mine. Will you, in exchanging the money for the stereotypes at the 'rendezvous', prefer to receive the stereotypes developed or undeveloped, like the packages you have received already? Answer these questions with precision, in the *Republique du Var*."

On the 18th M. Thomson inserted in the newspaper the *Republique du Var* :

"Paul to Pierre—I accept all your conditions, with the reservation that the place indicated presents full security to my agent, who will only be allowed to come to a place considered suitable."

On the 19th a letter-card was put in the post of Toulon containing the following :

"Arrive Toulon toward eleven o'clock. Enter the Grand Hotel under the name Barot.

"Toward one o'clock you will be called to the telephone, and you will be told under what initial to claim a letter from the Poste Restante.

"Go there immediately with marguerites in your buttonhole; reach also the meeting place indicated in the letter. The place chosen will be on the main road, about 10 kilometres from Toulon, in a place quite open, to avoid the possibility of being waylaid or followed; have, then, all faith.

"Insert in the *Republique du Var*, Monday—'Accept your conditions, start 22nd at 9 o'clock at night, unless wire to contrary.' The meeting will then take place Wednesday afternoon, 23rd."

On the 22nd of October there appeared in the *Republique du Var* :

"Paul to Pierre—Accept your conditions; start on 23rd at nine o'clock p.m."

Conforming to the instructions of the last letter, Inspector Sulzbach, of the service of the Sûreté, on the 22nd took train leaving at 9.20 at night, having as its destination Toulon. He alighted at the Grande Hotel, and signed the name Barot. A little before two o'clock he was called to the telephone.

"Is that you, Pierre?"

"Here, Paul."

"The conditions, are they accepted?"

"Yes, I have the money."

"It is quite understood that you will be alone and unarmed?"

The reply being in the affirmative, the telephonist said :

"That is understood ; then claim the letter to the initials A.B.C."

M. Sulzbach went at once to the Poste Restante, after having put in his buttonhole a bouquet of marguerites. The moment he received the letter he made the fact known while still in the post office to one of his colleagues : then he went out of the post office slowly, obviously reading the letter, which was couched in these terms :

"Go at once, take a carriage at rue Racine. Order yourself to be driven to Ollioules and there take the route to the 'Gorges d'Ollioules'. At kilometre 20*, send back the carriage to await you at Ollioules ; walk on till you come to kilometre 19.2. There await me. Try to be at the meeting place, 19.2. kilometre, toward three o'clock. Keep your word, be alone, and make no plans to have me caught."

M. Sulzbach went to the rue Racine and started by carriage for Ollioules ; at three o'clock precisely he was at the rendezvous, having sent his carriage to await him.

A quarter of an hour afterward, he saw pass him a motor-car in which was a young man in a dark suit and wearing a white hat. The motor vanished round the bend of the road, but five minutes afterward a man clothed in a grey dust-coat, wearing a travelling-cap, his face somewhat hidden by large glasses, came from the direction in which the motor had gone.

*A Numbered "milestone".

From a few metres' distance Monsieur Sulzbach called to him :

"Are you Pierre ? I am Paul."

"I am Pierre."

"Have you the stereotypes ? Here is the amount due," continued the inspector, showing him the packet of thousand-franc notes of which he was the carrier.

"Yes."

"You see—I am alone and unarmed !"

The distance which separated them at that moment was but one yard. Monsieur Sulzbach braced himself up and sprang with one bound upon the man, and without giving him time to recover, brought him to the ground and disarmed him.

Then he fired with the revolver two shots into the air as a call to his agents hidden in the vicinity. They closed in immediately, and M. Seville made at once a first interrogation, so much a feature of French justice, of the mysterious individual who had been so dramatically arrested, and while they were going along the road the following conversation took place.

"I call myself Ullmo, Charles Benjamin—born at Lyon 17th February, 1882—midshipman—home address, Villa 'Glegle', in Mourillon, living in company with my mistress, Louise-Elisa Welsch, called La Belle Lison."

The police officers, in spite of being hardened to their work, felt their brows colour with shame ; the traitor was an officer of the French Marines.

The affair Ullmo created a great deal of notoriety. At that time France was passing through a feverish crisis of "espionniste" or spy fever ; and the people's fear was not without foundation, for the capture of Ullmo was only the prelude to other arrests. Three days after the unmasking of the midshipman, an officer of the Territorials, Berton, and his mistress, convicted of treason, were delivered to justice. The 11th of November, four spies (Andre, Merindol, Balin, Faget) were caught in one swoop and arraigned at Marseilles by the *Sûreté-Général*. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that from the beginning of the Ullmo enquiry the examiners suspected treason, it was never proved ; the felon's officer, at that time elsewhere on his regular holiday, only raised

the point in civil jurisdiction as to the degree of culpability for the infraction of the law of espionage and blackmail.

From the beginning of the enquiry search was made at the post office at Toulon, to recover and trace all telegrams sent off by Ullmo.

Attention was drawn to one of them, sent on the 12th of August, under the initials S.H.6. Its destination was Brussels, and it commenced with the words :

“Ask 850,000 francs,” and was signed, “A.B.888 Toulon.”

It could not be proved that the telegram came from Ullmo, the handwriting on the original was somewhat thicker than the handwriting of the accused. However, this, together with other clues of interest, was sent to Paris.

Meanwhile in the capital a search was being made among the telegrams known as “telegrams of passage”.*

A few days after, M. Leydet, the examining magistrate, placed in charge of the *instruction*, was put in possession of a despatch having for its destination H.B.888 Toulon, and signed S.H.6. It read as follows :

“Price not discussable.”

After this another telegram was traced, which was sent from Toulon on the 14th of August. The original, seized at Toulon, was as follows :

“S.H.6 Poste Restante. We will discuss the price. Be at Brussels, Friday night. I will arrive there 16th August, or if that impossible, 17th August. A.B. Toulon.”

The word “soir” (evening) had been crossed out. The post office employee had made a note of it, and had written “one word erased”, and the sender had initialled this memoranda.

So far Ullmo had used sufficient cunning to suggest that he had all the making of a great criminal in him ; yet like so

*Foreign telegrams, which, coming from foreign countries and addressed to the provinces, are all received at Paris in the first place and re-expedited to their provincial destination.

many others before him he made one single slip—quite a trivial one, yet sufficient to convict him indisputably of the charge brought against him. In a moment of absent-mindedness he initialled the alteration with his true initials ! If more proof that this were needed it was there, also, in the fact that the writing of those initials was his !

Crushed to the earth by this discovery, the traitor entirely gave in—and with tears flowing from his eyes made the following declaration :

“Some time back I contracted the daily habit of smoking opium in the morning from eleven to twelve o’clock, and in the afternoon from five to six o’clock, and at night until one in the morning. In the course of my reveries, I found myself in a state of complete stupefaction. It was in vain that I sought to cure myself of that vice.

“The idea to offer to a foreign power documents which I knew myself able to secure came to me in one of those reveries, in which I had lost all sense of duty. At the end of May I wrote to the agent of a foreign Power suggesting that I should receive their answer through announcements in the paper. A long time afterward, just as I was starting on the July manœuvres on the Algerian coast, my eyes fell on the following announcement, which appeared the twenty-third or twenty-fourth July : ‘A.B.C. to his little darling B.T.X. Take letter Poste Restante Toulon under the initials A.B.999.’

“In the early part of August I secured that letter, by which I was notified to make my proposals under the initials S.H.6, so I wrote :

“‘Want 950,000 at Antwerp but prefer Brussels 16th August, telegraph which hotel. A.B. 888 Toulon.’

“I received the following answer :

“‘Price seems undiscussable ; could perhaps make offer after having seen goods. If you consent, come Brussels. If no agreement arrived at, will refund your fare. I shall stay at Hotel de L’Universe et Suede. Ask for M. Talbot. Telegraph answer. Signed S.H.6.’

“The same day I answered the telegram, against the correction of which I absent-mindedly appended my signature.

"On Saturday, 17th August, I arrived in Paris, after which I took the twelve-forty train to Brussels. There I went to the Hotel L'Esperance, near to the station, giving my name as D'Ubrac. I then telephoned to the Hotel L'Universe and asked if M. Talbot were there: the answer being in the affirmative, I went there at once.

"As soon as I entered M. Talbot's room he asked me if I had brought the documents. I answered 'No', and the conversation proceeded as follows:

" 'Why did you not bring them?'

" 'Because before bringing them I wish to know whether you intended to accept more or less my price.'

" 'How am I to fix a price if I have not seen the goods?'

" 'By the simple explanation that I have made you, you ought to be able to understand their extreme value. If you were a "technician" you would understand at once.'

" 'I am not a "technician". I am only an intermediary. I only buy to sell again, and before buying I desire to know for sure that I can resell. And then, what a price! How can you ask 95,000 francs?'

" 'I telegraphed you 950,000 francs, for documents of such enormous value!'

" 'It must have been a telegraphic error: would you be prepared to take 450,000 francs?'

" 'Is that a solid offer?'

" 'No, I cannot be sure, as I am but an intermediary.'

"Briefly, that is what passed between us. After that we separated without having come to any decision. It was agreed that I should go back to Paris to the Hotel de la Neva, in the name of d'Ubrac, Talbot should telegraph me to say whether or no the thing should be brought under discussion."

At this pathetic point of his confessions the judge stopped him.

"To allure Talbot, did you not give him at least one document?"

"I affirm," responded Ullmo, in a most determined tone, "that I took with me to Brussels no documents, or copies of any sort, nor photographs, and that I have said nothing that could furnish him with useful information.

"I know the importance of this which I declare, and if I had delivered anything I would tell you, but I repeat that I

have not given him anything, and as I am the only one who knew what he had there ; I swear to you that he had nothing—nothing.

“I am a miserable wretch, I am horrified at myself. It is opium which has brought me to this pass—opium, which a woman of Toulon, Marcelle Joujou, taught me to smoke when I was twenty years of age.”

Ullmo did not reveal all the truth. Certainly it was opium which had annihilated his will-power, and had perverted his moral sense, so that it was easy for him to commit a crime, but it was not the cause in this case. Ullmo had committed treason for a sordid motive ; to get money for an insatiable mistress, for “La Belle Lison”, who dominated the legal proceedings as she had dominated the life of Ullmo.

He first knew her in 1905 ; it was one of those numerous “little alliances” which from all time have given to the young bloods of the French port of war the reputation of being at one and the same time so “Bohemian” and also so well conducted superficially. Their “liaison” grew out of a sympathy for a detested past, which nearly always floats in the atmosphere of these unhealthy loves or “amours”.

That he loved La Belle Lison is proved by his continued sacrifices for her ; firstly the cessation of gambling, of which he was passionately fond, and then his personal liberty—for he lived with her, under her thumb, in the villa called “Glegle”.

His mistress completed the enchantment by reintroducing opium, which they smoked, drugging themselves together. This fact alone would probably have proved the downfall of Ullmo in the long-run, but Lison did not even wait to let time run its course. She was expensive, and she loved travel, so they went, dragging their happiness, and their vice, to Switzerland, to Biarritz, to Paris, to Monte Carlo—and in particular the Casino—and everywhere they went it meant theatres, carriages, expensive clothing, and not least of all opium (at the cost of 150 francs a month). The small annual income of 2,000 francs melted as though it were snow thrown into a blazing furnace, and before long Ullmo devoured, in addition, the 70,000 francs which he had inherited from his father.

Then, in order not to lose Lison, he reverted to the gambling which he had in the first place discarded for her. He rushed

to Monte Carlo, to San Remo ; but relentless ill-luck followed him wherever he went. In a burst of energy he tried to free himself from his passion, to save in this way his honour and his life ; but his effort was useless, in vain.

Worried by her incessant demands for money, he was tempted—and was lost. Little by little a monstrous idea germinated in his brain, weakened by opium ; it took root there until on one fatal day when, commanding temporarily the torpedo destroyer *Carabine*, he possessed himself of secret documents for the purpose of photographing them.

The Council of War at Toulon showed itself implacable. After three sittings, two of which were *en camera*, and in spite of the moving plea by Maître Antony Aubin, who proved his client to be crippled by the triple fatality of opium, love, and an inherited low type of mentality, on the 22nd of February Ullmo was condemned to perpetual detention in an enclosed fortress, and to military degradation, for having attempted to sell secrets of State to a foreign Power.

When Ullmo was asked if he had anything to say in his defence, he stood up, and in a harsh voice shouted, "I am facing men in the uniform of my country, and I know this is the last time I shall wear it. I know how low I have fallen, and I realize the enormity of my crime ; but I swear most solemnly that I neither sold nor tried to sell——" And the wretched man fainted.

The judge advocate, in asking the Court to find Ullmo guilty of treason and not merely of espionage, declared that his argument would be reinforced if he could quote precedents, but, fortunately, there had never before been a case of a naval officer turning traitor.

The Court found that Ullmo had been in relations with a foreign Power and that he had made copies of secret documents which he had no right to have in his possession, but that he had not actually sold any of the documents, and, as already mentioned, he was condemned to life imprisonment.

To this terrible punishment there was added one other, perhaps then the most horrible of all, for it was one which racked and tore the unfortunate officer, and pierced the innermost part of his being.

In court, when La Belle Lison was heard as a witness, she revealed a bitter heartlessness toward her late lover. With

an utter and complete callousness she threw Ullmo aside as she would a torn glove, she mocked his love, betrayed his confidences, and acted as though she were his enemy rather than his mistress who had been so much the direct cause of his downfall. Her deposition finished, she passed near to Ullmo, and like the inexorable Destiny, indifferently ignored him. He had served her purposes—she had sucked his life-blood, had obtained all there was to be had. . . . As Gabrielle Bompard betrayed Eyraud, as Mme. Labouret spurned her lover Boppe . . . so now La Belle Lison did likewise.

Anguis in herba !

THE CASTLE ASSASSIN

Passion.

IX.—THE CASTLE ASSASSIN

BOPPE

THE case of Boppe is extraordinary in its psychological study of a man who, swayed and influenced by an overpowering passion for his fascinating mistress, hated his wife one hour only to be most devoted to her the next. From the day he first met the widow who was to be the cause of his crime he became a mental Jekyll and Hyde; he endeavoured to murder his wife in a callous, cold-blooded way, the equal of which is not easily to be traced in the annals of criminology, and yet, afterward, wept like a child for the harm he had done her.

Boppe was the son of a cavalry officer who retired in 1882, and early in life was established by his father in a sound career, that of inspector of rivers and forests. Devoting himself to work, he quickly gained the good opinion of his chief, so much so that, in the course of years, he obtained promotion after promotion.

One day he met Mlle. Suzanne Demange, like himself descended of a good family, being niece of Barrès, the famous member of the *Chambre des Députés*. Both of them became conscious of a mutual attraction, and thus in September 1906 they entered into a marriage of inclination (as compared to the customary marriage of convenience practised in France), and thus united two honourable families.

Back from their honeymoon they established themselves on the first floor of the Château de Montbois, a lovely old castle which proudly imposes itself on the route de Toul, and here they lived happily together until the outbreak of the Great War.

Boppe was mobilized, and it was while he was still in the

Army that he first met Mme. Labouret, a charming widow with two children. Their acquaintance ripened until at last it became intimate, and Boppe occupied a definite place in Mme. Labouret's heart, thus following in the footsteps of two predecessors, a doctor and another Army officer, whom he displaced.

Like so many others before him, and doubtless like so many others whose hidden lives are not exposed to public fame, Boppe's inflammable passion blazed forth in all its intensity when fanned by the woman's subtle care. He became her adoring slave, she his queen. Every desire she expressed was fulfilled, every franc which he could spare was spent eagerly upon her.

He installed her and her children in Paris, and later purchased, on her behalf, a house at Nancy which cost him 80,000 francs. The widow must have realized her good luck in obtaining him as her lover, and not intending to let him go if she could help it, she summoned together all her powers of persuasion until she extracted from him a promise to marry her.

How she expected him to release himself it is impossible to say : perhaps she hoped a divorce would follow, possibly she encouraged him in the vile crime which he later committed. However, whatever her intentions, having obtained his promise she did not forget to remind him of it, again and again, until at last she worked him up to the required pitch.

In the meantime it must not be imagined that Mme. Boppe was oblivious of her husband's intrigues. Unhappily she was too well aware of them, but her religion forbade all suggestion of divorce ; so, perforce, she had to remain content to let the *affaire* work itself out to a fulfilment, possibly praying and believing that he would tire eventually of the siren woman and return once again to his wife.

Such was the position on the 7th of June, 1920.

The evening passed very quietly at the castle, there being present at dinner, Boppe, his wife, and his sister, Mme. de Préval, and for once he did not quit the table until after the dessert, but remained with his wife, silent and grave, surveying between two great cups of tea, the big drawing-room, where the lamp stood near the fireplace, distributing a pale and sad light.

Conversation was not very brisk. A few vague remarks were exchanged about the glorious death of General Laperrière in the Sahara, and of the signatures of yesterday, the 5th of June, 1920, which had been appended to the treaty of Grand-Trianon imposed on a vanquished and mutilated country.

"You will not go to-night to Nancy, Paul?" asked Mme. de Préval, who was visiting Montbois for a few days.

"No, I am rather tired," and, turning toward his wife, said: "If you are willing, Suzanne, I should like to go to bed early."

Little by little boredom settled down on the group. The sound of the clock as it struck ten slightly dissipated the feeling.

"It is time to retire," said the chatelain. "I wish you good night, sister." He went out whistling a hunting tune.

"Our company bores him," said Mme. Préval.

"Say, rather, my company," responded Mme. Boppe. "Happily Providence has given me the consolation of children."

In her turn she got up, followed by her sister-in-law.

At the door she shuddered. "I never pass these corridors without terror, since the mysterious and tragic death of Grandfather."

"Oh, you know that history is more reassuring than legend, Suzanne! No, he was not killed by the husband of the 'servant mistress' whom he had installed here. He had a sudden seizure, which took him off. That is all: you are nervous, Suzanne."

"Sensitive only, my dear. I wish I did not believe in presentiments! But here I have the feeling of being menaced by phantoms."

"Childish nonsense! Sleep well and you will feel fresher in the morning. Good night!"

"I will go and see the children. Afterward I will try and sleep."

"And reassure yourself. Good night!"

That night Mme. Boppe had her husband for a bed-companion; strange to say, a most unusual occurrence. In spite of the fact that since the War they had had their sleeping arrangements apart, having installed twin beds, for some

unknown reason the forester that night climbed into the same bed which his wife occupied.

Despite the feeling of unhappiness which had possessed her, she drowsily dropped asleep, and thus she lay for some time. All at once, however, a nightmare gripped her in its clutches, and it seemed to her that a sword pierced through her jaw-bone.

She struggled and woke up. A taste, disgusting and bitter, was in her mouth.

"My God! My God!" cried the young woman. "What has happened to me?"

Sarcastically a sneering voice at her ear cried: "Look at yourself in the glass of the wardrobe; you will see what has happened to you."

Terrified, she jumped from her bed and tottered toward the cabinet-de-toilette. There she looked at herself in the mirror. The next moment she screamed with terror. Her face was bloody and crushed—she had been shot through the jaw. Somehow or other she faltered back into the bedroom, only to experience a still worse horror, for as she entered the room her husband raised his hand, and, from his bed, deliberately shot at her for the second time. The shot entered her left ear, passed into the flesh of her cheek, and joined the first shot which had torn into her mouth, cutting her tongue.

Despite the wound in her mouth, Mme. Boppe was able to cry piteously for a priest to be fetched, for it seemed to her then that she had not many more hours to live.

There was still no pity in the heart of this vile wretch for his ghastly crime. "What for?" he asked callously. "You went to confession only three days ago." With that he made his exit from the room, leaving her, for all he knew, to bleed to death.

This she might easily have done, but, fortunately for the poor woman, the noise created by the firing had not passed unnoticed; in an adjacent room their young son had been awakened by his mother's cries. Panic-stricken, he ran up to the floor above, where lived relations. Thoroughly alarmed, several of them hurried downstairs and into Suzanne's room; but she was not there, for somehow or other she had dragged herself to the end of the *appartement* where was Boppe's office and a telephone. Arriving there she had collapsed.

While someone telephoned for Doctor Michel, others

tenderly carried Mme. Boppe back to her bed, but by the time Doctor Michel arrived Boppe was back among his family again, so to him the Doctor naturally turned.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Do not speak of it to me," answered Boppe, shrugging his shoulders; "she has attempted suicide."

While the doctor attended his patient, Mme. de Préval took her brother aside.

"It is impossible; never would Suzanne have had the idea of taking her life. You know the religious sentiment of your wife."

"What will you that I say? Perhaps you are right. Probably it is an accident. All that I know is that she went toward her wardrobe where was her little revolver."

"Did she possess a revolver?"

"Yes, the revolver belonged to her brother."

"The one who killed himself?"

"Yes, that one! There are such things as mascots of bad luck. This revolver must be a fated one. How or why, I do not pretend to know!"

For the rest of that night Doctor Michel sat up with Mme. Boppe, but early next morning a motor ambulance arrived to remove her to the clinic of Bon Secour in Nancy.

Then occurred an extraordinary happening; Mme. Boppe was escorted to the hospital accompanied *only by her husband*. What a bizarre situation! The husband who had endeavoured to murder his wife escorting her to the hospital for treatment.

How utterly strange is the fact that the relations permitted such a thing to happen. For all they knew he might have made use of the opportunity to finish the crime, which to his point of view was, so far, unsuccessful! As Barrès, at the trial, rightly pointed out, the people who should have been beside Mme. Boppe were not—for instance, Mme. de Préval or any other member of the family.

Fortunately, Boppe did not make any further attempt on the life of his wife; on the contrary, he held her hand most tenderly and burst into tears for the evil he had committed; a most incredible happening when compared to his attitude of the night before.

Nevertheless, once inside the clinic he cast aside the tenderness which he betrayed for her in that brief ride, for, in relating

the story of the mishapening to one of the attendants of the clinic, he repeated the story he had told Mme. de Préval ; that Suzanne had endeavoured to commit suicide, the reason being that she was a pitiful victim of an inherited neurasthenia, and once again quoted the death of Suzanne's brother as evidence of the fact.

It was subsequently proved, however, that Boppe lied in more than one respect in this story. The revolver had not belonged to his wife's brother, but was his own, and had, as a matter of fact, been given to him only the day before by his mistress, so it appears quite obvious that Boppe committed the crime at her direct instigation.

The days passed by, and under the tender care of Sister Louise and the surgeon's skill, Mme. Boppe's wounds began to heal. As soon as she was well enough the doctor interrogated her, but despite all entreaties to speak she held her peace and would not reveal a word of what happened that fatal night ; but had anyone at the hospital been a keen observer it would have been noticed that the look given by the convalescent to her husband whenever he entered into the room was eloquent enough, while to the questions asked her by the forester she would not answer one word, but shut herself up in sullen silence, which was attributed by the staff either to shame for the deed she had tried to do, or to the pain of her wounds.

The day arrived for her to leave the clinic, but she had let nothing transpire which could lead anyone to suspect the truth. Only and solely to her confessor did she tell her story, and he, tied by sacramental secrecy, was obliged to hold his tongue.

One day there arrived at Montbois about ten visitors : the family lawyer, two attorneys from Paris, three relations of M. Boppe and three relations of Mme. Boppe, Mme. Préval, and, last but not least, the illustrious M. Maurice Barrès of the French Academy.

From the big drawing-room where they were first shown in they passed into the study of Monsieur Boppe. What happened there was not revealed for many months later, but since the trial of Boppe it has been possible to piece together the result

of that family council—surely the most extraordinary ever held.

“Paul, speak the truth—you wished to kill your wife!” Such was the accusation, in answer to which Boppe lowered his head. Now and again he looked round with a supplicating look toward Mme. Boppe, whose head was still in bandages, but she, sitting with fixed eyes, appeared to see nothing.

“We are gathered together in a family council, we must arrive at some decision. Will you consent to whatever is decided?”

“I have no choice,” said the cornered man.

“Very well, let us go over the facts. On the night of last June 7th and 8th, you wished to kill your wife, Suzanne. That admirable creature would have said nothing if you had not spread the report all over the place that she had tried to commit suicide, contrary to all our traditions and to her Christian faith.

“Why this odious and cowardly crime? To be free to marry a street-walker whom you met in 1918 just before you were given the position at Monthureux-sur-Saône, of director of a group of Vosges Forests. She made a fool of you, she deceived you, she squandered your substance ; as proof of all this there is that house in the rue Pasteur, which you bought for her. You have thrown away the patrimony of your children on this woman.”

“God knows,” interrupted a third person, “if this creature is not vulgar and with nothing to recommend her!”

“Whatever she may be,” said another voice, drawling and disdainful, of the person who presided, “you have committed an abominable crime for the sake of that woman. What do you propose to do about it?”

“Kill myself!” stammered the accused man.

“Of what good would that be ; beside being the cause of another scandal, for which we have little desire, your death would not solve the problem of your family.”

“I will expatriate myself.”

“So be it ! But not before you have put your dependents out of need. You can go to some place in America if you wish : to that I see no objection, so long as we never hear from you again, but only on condition that you renounce the greater portion of your worldly goods. After that you may die if you

wish ; but you must not impoverish your wife nor your children. To whom," continued the president, "you must make the future assured. Let us see ; you shall give your wife 30,000 francs pension and to your children you shall cede a million francs."

"That makes a million and a half," said the criminal. "I have not got it."

"Pardon, but you have got it ; the death of your father brought to you four millions."

"One word I beg of you," interrupted one of the others, and in view of the statement it must be concluded that he was one of Boppe's relations, "Suzanne Demange brought nothing to her marriage, and you want——"

"Pardon, she brought 300,000 francs."

"Did they ever materialize ? I doubt it !"

In this way the conversation veered round until the subject drifted from the question of crime and morals, and the whole argument became reduced to terms of money, and eventually the husband understood that, to buy the silence of his relations, it was necessary to give a donation of 600,000 francs to the children and a pension of 18,000 francs to the mother, guaranteed by a deposit of 300,000 francs in the bank.

"It is understood, of course, you will write a letter acknowledging your ignoble deed. The lawyers will help you to put everything in order."

With this last shaft the visitors left Boppe, soothed of his terror and mulcted of 900,000 francs.

A few days after M. Boppe appeared at his lawyers to write the following letter :

Paris, 6th August, 1920.

SUZANNE,

"I have committed against your self-respect and against your person an abominable act, which seems to me much more odious than I am able to express to you ; since that fatal night of the 7th of June last I have realized your grandeur of soul and your generosity. I have confessed already in the letters I have written you, also in those to your mother and your uncle, and avowed the horror of my criminal act in trying to shoot you in your sleep, and still a second time, in spite of the fact that I

have no reproach to cast at you. I can but express the remorse which seizes me ; I should have lost everything in a moment of folly and I have certainly merited everything which has been arranged by our two families ; I have only to keep to arrangements, even though it is a frightful thought that I shall not see my children perhaps for years.

“I shall leave the country ; my demand for a post in the colonies is on the point of being agreed to by the Ministry, and my nomination to a district on the Ivory Coast will appear almost immediately.

“I am willing that you should request the Tribunal of the Seine for a judicial separation ; it will be presented by my family lawyer Maître Duplan, who will facilitate and hasten matters according to your desire.

“I accept equally and in the same spirit of submission, without delay, to provide myself with a judicial adviser, recognizing that this measure is justifiable. Also I will arrange before my departure from France, with a lawyer in Paris, the early sale of the property inherited from my father at Nancy, that is to say, in next September, to the profit of my two children, a gift of capital, 600,000 francs, in good stock, to be taken from the said property, which shall be revertible on the head of the surviving child, if one of the two should die before reaching twenty-one years of age : from which you shall derive an annual and life-lasting income of 18,000 francs.

“You will keep necessarily all your own things, your jewels, also our silver (except that which goes with the inheritance of Montbois), all our household furniture, except a few things that are my personal possessions through inheritance, of which I enclose a list.

“Also I will transfer to you the half of the sum which we have paid in insurance on the heads of our children. The contracts that I make now, after ripe reflection, in full knowledge of the cause, without being forced in any one particular, are morally agreed to by my sister and brother-in-law of Préval, also by my aunt Henning, who have discussed it with their respective family lawyers. I have also undertaken to show them

this letter before sending it to you, and I send you now the replies that they have written to me.

“Adieu, Suzanne, and pardon again and always. I give into your keeping our children; I ask you to arrange in some way that I hear occasional news of them. Their memory will dictate to you your conduct in that respect.

“BOPPE.”

The lawyer folded up the letter. “Perfect; well expressed!” he murmured. “Now the question of money, which I shall have to put in order at once! What do you propose to do?”

“I have procured the power of disposal of property and I hope to leave for Konakry, but while waiting for a situation far off I will take a job with a firm of seed-growers at Dunkirk.”

“So be it, but do not delay in appointing someone to carry all your arrangements through. The family of your wife is tenacious and very capable of doing you a nasty turn.”

This was the wise counsel which Boppe was foolish in not taking seriously, but he must have had a bad angel watching over him—perhaps the one which inspired him in his crime—for instead of paying up his agreed debt, and thus have proved that at least he had some sense of honour still within him, he did nothing else but continue to run after his mistress, while his chief occupation seemed to be of finding means to hide his fortune, to try and devise some way to avoid keeping his promises. More than this, he endeavoured to discover a way of ridding himself legally of his wife, and at the instigation of his adventuress, who poured ridicule on his sense of shame, he consulted an agent of a private detective police force as to how he could provoke a situation which would compromise his wife in such a way that he would be able to get a divorce from her, and at the same time putting himself in such a position as to get the custody of his children and the care of their money.

Meanwhile his wife, never having recovered from the feeling of terror with which Montbois inspired her, left there and settled in Paris, near to the Trocadero, while Boppe journeyed the country from Orleans to Chateauroux on the pretext of

trading with his seeds, but in reality to try and play an easy game by finding a large home in the name of his lady friend and settling his money in her name, therefore making it inaccessible to his family.

So the months passed. At the end of a year the family Demange began to get angry and went to the lawyer employed by the criminal. He, however, could do nothing for them, so they threatened to follow up Boppe. When this threat came to reach Boppe's ears, he took but little notice of it.

"It is not a scandal for which these people are thirsty, but money, and therefore their reluctance to a scandal will keep them quiet," he argued.

Unfortunately for himself, Boppe reasoned badly. Whether Mme. Boppe's family decided to institute proceedings against him with a view to obtaining vengeance, or whether they wished only to secure for Mme. Boppe what one must acknowledge were just dues, the fact remains that they pocketed their pride, took the risk of scandal, and in October 1921 brought an action against Boppe in the civil courts for legal separation with alimony.

There could only be one consequence to this step ; during the course of the proceedings Boppe's letter, admitting guilt of attempted murder, was produced in court.

After that, of course, there was no alternative but for the law to take its own course independently of all private concerns, so that Boppe's letter quickly travelled from the Fourth Chamber (the divorce courts) to the office of the Public Prosecutor.

An enquiry was opened by M. Lecomte, examining magistrate, who soon realized the part which Boppe had played in the drama, and ordered M. Villon, Divisional Commissioner of the 15th (mobile) Brigade, to arrest the criminal.

Hearing this news, Boppe had it announced that he had left for Indo-China, or French Guinea, but the police were far from being side-tracked by such a simple subterfuge, and the forester lost his nerve and fled. From Montargis he went to Pithiviers, from thence to Metz, from Metz to Jussey, then on to Eguzon.

On the 17th of December he endeavoured, with his mistress, to cross the frontier into Belgium, giving as a reason for so

doing that he was about to purchase a small restaurant in that country.

Where cleverer men than he had failed there was no reason—outside that of pure luck—why he should have succeeded, so that it is not surprising that he was arrested at the frontier station of Feignies and taken to Nancy, where he was installed in the prison.

On the 25th of October, 1922, he was tried at Nancy for attempted murder upon the person of his wife. During the course of the trial there were revealed, obviously, further details of his intrigue with Mme. Labouret, and it was estimated that, in addition to the house which he had presented to her, he had spent upon her the large total of 150,000 francs.

This was not the only bad effect which his connection with her had had upon him, for his superiors testified that before he met the widow his work was of the highest order, and that they had greatly relied upon him, but such was her influence that subsequent to their first meeting his work had declined, and they noticed in him a distinct moral decadence.

The trial left little doubt as to the character of the woman who had ensnared the accused in her toils. In her evidence she completely and callously betrayed him at every opportunity and expressed neither compassion for the plight into which, at her promptings, he had fallen, nor gratitude for all he had done for her during the time she was his mistress.

If he had sinned, there was at least one redeeming feature—if it could be called this—that all he had done had been for the sake of love—or passion—but on her part it was obvious that she had only one thought in mind—money, luxury. No love, surely, otherwise she would have defended her lover, have eased his misery by expressing some sort of loving solicitude.

How different was his evidence! At this first opportunity he chivalrously shouldered all responsibility and exonerated Mme. Labouret from all blame.

Maître Campinchi, who defended Boppe, had an uphill fight, which was not made easier by the smashing attacks of Maître Gulton and Maître de Chauveron. Once even there was a mild sensation in court when M. Campinchi pronounced a clever and touching plea for Boppe. Instantly M. Gulton arose and with some heat exclaimed, "*On apporte ici les modes*

de Paris !” (He brings here Paris customs.) There was great excitement at this retort, for Paris and the provinces can never see eye to eye together, and doubtless the worthy Nancy bourgeoisie were duly impressed, and frowned at M. Campinchi for his methods !

Moreover, the defence was not assisted by the fact that the trial was held at Nancy, where the weight of local opinion was dead against the prisoner ; also, in a curious psychological way his appearance was against him, for he was small, had a nose like a tapir, and a receding chin. In fact, he compared badly with the handsome and illustrious Barrès, who appeared as a witness against him.

Nevertheless the defence fought brilliantly, and in the end Boppe was sentenced to five years’ hard labour and ten years’ confinement ; a moderate sentence considering the sordidness and enormity of his crimes.

At any rate, even if the defence had anticipated less, the prosecution had hoped and worked for a more harsh sentence.

The last words of this strange little man, this mixture of good and evil, were for his wife ; tearfully he asked pardon for all the wrong he had done to her, their children and their families. With that he disappeared to work out his punishment.

FOOD FOR MUSHROOMS

Murder.

X.—FOOD FOR MUSHROOMS

CARRARA

AUGUSTIN-FREDERIC LAMARRE, having joined the Ouest Railway Company in the year 1857, was one of the first guards to serve on that line, and he remained on his job for thirty-six years, after which he retired to live on an income of 2,500 francs inherited from his mother, and 1,000 francs pension from the railway company.

In the meantime he had married his only daughter to the grocer in the rue Labrousse, so when he retired it seemed to him that his own ground-floor flat at 7, rue d'Epinay, at Malakoff, seemed lonely and too large to be inhabited only by his wife and himself.

Having mentioned this once or twice previously it did not surprise his wife when, one day, he said to her :

“Well, mother, do you not find this house too large for us two ?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “What do you suppose, my poor man ! One only brings up children that they may one day leave us like this.”

“And what would you say to replacing our daughter by two little beauties—quite small ones ?”

“Well, now, how can you think of it—at our age ?”

“You have not understood me, my good soul ! I mean by adoption ! A few steps from here there has just died a widow, leaving two little children. Suppose we adopt them !”

“I would like it very much, but two more mouths—that would be expensive !”

“Very well, I will work.”

So this gallant old man, who had already worked so many years of his life, looked round for a fresh situation so that he might obtain the money with which to cherish two little

orphans, and so spend the last few remaining years of his life with the sound of youthful laughter ringing in his ears, and the sight of young faces to gladden and invigorate his fading eyesight.

It was not difficult for him to secure a situation; the Comptoir d'Escompte was quite glad to make use of his services, and in view of his honesty he was made an auxiliary to the discount counter and collector of monies.

For four years he worked faithfully until the sun rose on the morning of the 30th of November, 1897. He started out to work as usual, his astrakan cap pulled over his snowy locks, his greatcoat buttoned up to his neck. At the bank he was given a list of addresses at which he was to call to collect money. At some of these he called—and the people who paid to him the debts due to the bank were the last people to see him alive, for Father Lamarre, as he was known, was never seen again.

When, by half-past eleven at night, Lamarre had not returned home, his wife began to get terribly anxious. Ten times she had been to the window, thinking she heard his familiar footsteps along the road, but only to find that her ears had deceived her. The little ones, anxious for their good-night cuddle, had resisted going to sleep as long as they could, but at last had given way and were quiet in their little beds. The soup on the hob had been so often re-heated that it had dwindled almost to nothing.

Presently a carriage stopped at the door. The concierge being in bed, Madame Lamarre cried out from behind the great front doorway, her heart beating and racing in her chest.

"Is it you?"

No one answered. Unafraid, she opened one of the shutters. Two men stood before her.

"Are you the concierge—do you know Monsieur Lamarre?"

"Yes, he lives here."

"Do you know if he has returned home?"

"No, he has not come back."

"You are perfectly sure?"

"Yes, I am waiting for him—I am Madame Lamarre."

The two men therefore explained that they had been sent by the bank, for Lamarre, not having returned there, the chief clerk, M. Bouvery, had thought that perhaps he had

been taken ill, and that someone had brought him home in a carriage. They came, therefore, to obtain news, not to bring it, and Mme. Lamarre could not resist the stab of fear which pierced into her heart.

All that night, in the little house at Malakoff, the poor woman stifled her heavy sobs for fear of waking the children.

As soon as the next day dawned, search began. The 30th of November, the day of his disappearance, the collector of dues had started on his round at seven o'clock in the morning with a mission that took him to the suburbs.

Thanks to the fact that a copy of the route which he had been instructed to take having been kept at the bank, it was possible for a detective to follow his track, so to speak, step by step. He was supposed to have gone to Kremlin-Bicêtre and from thence to Gentilly, rue Frileuse. His presence at Kremlin had been confirmed, but he had not put in an appearance at Gentilly.

It was from Kremlin onward, therefore, that it was necessary to begin the search.

The last house at which the collector had presented bills was situated at 41, rue du Kremlin. He had taken there, between the hours of one o'clock and two o'clock in the afternoon, two sums of money, one for 1,500 francs, paid to him by M. Martin, and another of 3,000 francs, which had been handed to him by M. Bonnefois. Following this he had entered the garden of the hospital, where he had had a little chat with the gardener. That was two o'clock. It was after this that he had disappeared.

The suggestion of flight was quickly negatived. The past history of this good man, who worked to nourish and bring up two children whom he had adopted, was a testimony for his honesty; added to which, it was argued, if it were flight he would have gone to the end of his round to secure a still larger sum of money.

On the other hand, if he had been taken ill and been succoured by somebody or other, this person would surely have already made known the fact!

Had he been robbed *en route*? was the next question the police asked themselves. Between Kremlin and Gentilly, it was true, the way was desolate and bordered by deep slopes, between which ran the Bièvre—tragic beauty spot—but the

tanners who worked round about there would surely have seen something of the presumed crime !

Inspector Maniez, instructed by M. Cochefert, Chief of the Sûreté, to handle the case, worked very hard, and soon ascertained that the people upon whom Lamarre had been told to call at Kremlin were as follows :

Martin, 41, rue du Kremlin.

Bonnefois, 41, rue du Kremlin.

Carrara, 7, rue Etienne-Dolet.

Cantarelle, 57, rue du Kremlin.

Messieurs Martin, Bonnefois and Carrara had paid the bills presented them.

As to M. Cantarelle, he had vainly awaited the coming of the collector.

Apparently Lamarre had disappeared after calling on Carrara, but before visiting Cantarelle, yet scarcely ten metres separated the dwelling of Monsieur Carrara from that of Monsieur Cantarelle ! Inspector Maniez was considerably worried. However, the police thought they could possibly track him if they took the house of M. Carrara as a base.

“At what hour did he come to you ?” they asked Carrara, who answered, “Toward half-past one.”

The collector had been seen at two o'clock talking with the gardener of the hospital, so that it was evident M. Carrara could not have had anything to do with the collector's disappearance.

Yet shortly afterward Carrara was arrested for the murder of Lamarre.

Xavier-Ange Carrara was born in Italy on the 17th of March, 1863, where he lived the earlier years of his life. He did not stop in his native country, however, but emigrated to France, where he settled down and eventually married a Lilloise (a native of Lille), Louise-Julie Roelant, a girl eleven years younger than himself.

Little did the priest know, when he married them, that in effect he was not only signing Carrara's marriage certificate, but also his death warrant, for Carrara, like Boppe, like Ullmo, like Gallay, was ruined by his love for a woman, though unlike the others it was his wife who was responsible for his downfall and not his mistress.

Before his marriage he was an excellent worker, particularly so in the culture of mushrooms, in which he was a specialist, but Louise-Julie was not content to live the life of a workman's spouse. She wanted money and more money ; she desired her husband to be master, not man. She imposed her will upon that of her husband, until he became avaricious like herself, and dissatisfied with his lot in life. He began to commit the worst of follies, and rapidly slid down the hill of decadence.

One day, obeying the dictation of her insistent demands, he decided to risk the whole of the small sum of money which—heaven only knows how !—he had managed to save in order to set himself up in his own business. To do this he purchased, in 1895, at the back of 7, rue Eitenne-Dolet, an old exploited stone quarry, in which he installed a mushroom bed.

He met with little success ; the spawn took its own time about growing, and while the fungi proved a constant drain upon his almost empty pocket, it did not bring him in sufficient to recompense him for either his original outlay or his current expenses. Consequently he became more and more desperate, until one day, in October 1896, according to a story subsequently told by his wife, who betrayed him to the law, he was misguided enough to set on fire his stable, so as to realize an insurance policy for 2,300 francs.

The money was but a drop in the ocean. Certainly it staved off absolute ruination for a short time, but matters began to go from bad to worse, and Carrara had to look round in order to find some method of making money.

Some time later his wife read aloud to him an account of how a maid murdered her mistress with the help of a narcotic which left no trace at the bottom of the glass, nor changed the colour of the drink, nor gave any taste at all.

"That is what we need," said Carrara. "You know a young pharmacy student ; you must ask him what is this narcotic and get him to give you some."

"What for ?"

Then to Carrara, who for the sake of the sous which she could earn, had encouraged his wife to have intimate relations with a certain Monsieur C——, aged 60 years, a big proprietor of Gentilly, an idea suggested itself.

"You must go and find M. C——. You must tell him that I have gone to Seine-et-Oise to fetch some mushroom spawn,

and that it is an opportunity to pass the evening with him at his house. During the meal, which you will take with him, you must drop this poison into his glass. He will fall asleep. Then I will appear and put a rope round his neck, which I will attach to the curtain-rod of the dining-room. People will think that the old man, disconsolate at the recent death of his wife, committed suicide. I will only take 5,000 francs, so that no one will suspect a theft or murder. . . .”

It was ingenious, but Madame Carrara, afraid to lend herself to this re-edition of the Gouffé affair, refused.

The end of November approached, and with it the usual worries. This month, however, they were even worse, because two bills were to be presented to them, one for 75 francs from the bank, and one for 178 francs by the Credit Lyonnais.

“We will borrow,” proposed his wife.

“Yes,” he agreed, “we will borrow, as always.”

Easy enough to borrow, but what of the afterward? It would become necessary to pay back, and as their affairs were not likely to improve, their worries would only collect all over again. Realizing this, Carrara burst forth into a furious temper.

“We are condemned to vegetate here all our lives. I have had enough of it ; we must finish it.”

“What do you mean—kill ourselves?”

“Enrich ourselves, on the contrary, by a clever stroke. Leave it to me. I shall endeavour to think out a scheme.”

That night he would not speak clearly. His “project”, he said, “had need to ripen!”

A few days afterward, the 29th of November, the Italian became more communicative.

“To-morrow is the day for both those collectors to come. When the first comes you must go up the staircase and look down over the balustrade to try and see if there is much money in his wallet ; if there is, make a sign and leave the rest to me.”

“Xavier!”

“Do not be afraid ; I have thought of everything. This shall be ‘neither seen nor heard,’ I assure you. You know well that a mushroom bed is like a tomb—it keeps its secrets well.”

In the end the woman allowed herself to be persuaded. After all, she was too sick and tired of living in debt and misery, and as her husband assured her there was no danger——

The first collector proved to be the one from the Credit Lyonnais, M. Meguir. He came during the morning.

While he turned over the papers in his wallet, Carrara interrogated his wife with a look. After hesitating she made a negative sign, so the mushroom grower asked his visitor if he would leave the account, which would be paid without fail the next day.

Lamarre appeared in the early afternoon ; across the square they could watch his approach. "You will do exactly as I order you," said Carrara.

The door opened. "Good morning," said the Italian. "Wait an instant, my wife will go up and fetch your money."

Lamarre put down his wallet, opened it, plunged in his hand—— The next instant he fell, an inert mass on the flagstones.

With the help of an enormous iron key, which was made for the purpose of tightening the nuts of his carriage wheels, Carrara had struck the poor old man on the nape of his neck, killing him instantly.

Rapidly, assisted by his wife, who cut the straps, the assassin examined the contents of the bag, taking out all the money therein.

It was now necessary quickly to make away with the corpse.

Covering it up with a cart-awning, Carrara, with the help of his wife, pulled it toward the chimney, which, placed underneath the courtyard, aerated the mushroom bed underneath, and by means of a cord let the corpse slide until it was about four metres from the bottom.

"Hold it well so that it does not slip the entire distance," cried Carrara.

In most mushroom growing plants in France there is used an immense furnace, analagous, but very much bigger, to those which are to be seen glowing in the darkness just outside the night watchmen's shelters. These bring about a combustion of deleterious gases which collect in the quarry, heat the air and, escaping through little holes, bring about a constant ventilation.

The evening before the Italian had placed this cauldron in position underneath the chimney and had fed it ready for lighting. Now, while his wife held on to the rope from which was suspended the corpse, he went down into the pit to light the fire. Before long the heat was intense. Given the signal

by her husband she let go, and the corpse slid down into the middle of the furnace. The next moment there was created a horrible odour of burning bones and flesh, never absent from the charring of a human body.

During the time the corpse was gradually turning to ashes Carrara callously watched its progress, and, moreover, saw that the work was being well done, for every now and again the gas escaped in the form of little explosions, caused by the combustion of flesh, and the débris of human remains was projected around the furnace. This Carrara gathered up and put back on the fire.

At last it was finished ; the incineration had lasted eight hours. After this the Italian let the brazier cool down, and, searching among the cinders at the bottom, found a little lump of gold, all that remained of Lamarre's watch and chain.

Carrara hid it underneath the furnace. "I shall sell that later," he said.

At four o'clock in the morning the assassin mounted the stairs to his bedroom. "That is done," he said to his wife. "Oh, the animal, how he has made me work !" Suddenly he looked at himself in the mirror and experienced a sudden feeling of panic ; his head and hands were quite black, covered by a greasy, stinking soot. After a moment, however, his nerve returned.

"You can rest easy," he said, washing himself with soft soap and warm water. "No one will discover anything ; nothing remains of it. Still, if the impossible should happen and I am caught, you will find in a hollow in the rock, which I have plugged with stones, a box made of white iron, on which I have engraved the number fifteen. It is my secret hoard of 26,210 francs exactly, of which 22,000 are in notes. Now I am sleepy. To-morrow we will go to Paris and have a good dinner. We have well earned it."

For an amateur murderer, Carrara had paid scrupulous attention to seeing that he remained unsuspected of the crime. Nevertheless he made one mistake. He told the police that Lamarre had visited him at one-thirty, but he forgot that neighbours, then as now, are always in full possession of secrets within the limits of sight and sound. Consequently their testimony was that the collector had called upon Carrara

at two-thirty ; that he had been seen to enter Carrara's house, but nobody had noticed him leaving again.

He also omitted to remember that the smell of burned flesh is unmistakable, also that women of the calibre of his wife should never be trusted with any sort of secret whatsoever. The evidence of Carrara's neighbour was considered sufficiently convincing to warrant the arrest of the mushroom-grower and his wife. Consequently on the 9th of December the couple were arrested and taken before the examining magistrate.

Oblivious of any sense of honour, of love, devotion or marriage ties, Mme. Carrara betrayed the whole story of the murder to the police, true enough in every respect except where it touched upon her own complicity. After this it was, of course, useless for Carrara to protest his innocence.

From this point the case ceases to possess any point of outstanding interest. The subsequent proceedings were extraordinarily monotonous ; there was no question of Carrara attempting to fight ; he knew his wife's confession on its own would ensure his conviction.

There was not even a cry of love or regret from either one or the other ; in fact, throughout the trial Carrara endeavoured to throw all the blame upon his wife, saying that the scheme was hers, that she had urged him to commit the crime. Nor was there the slightest suspicion of sincere emotion, except when now and again Madame Carrara cried for her children, asking what was to become of them. No pity for the poor victim, murdered without being able to put in one single blow in his own defence ; no remorse for Mme. Lamarre and the two orphaned children, so soon deprived of their adopted father.

The verdict was never in doubt from the beginning : Carrara was condemned to death, while his wife was sentenced to hard labour for life.

After the trial Carrara was removed to the famous prison on the Place de la Roquette, where he was placed in the condemned cell. For the first few days he suffered from the customary dejection, but later he regained his composure, and for some reason or other hypnotized himself into the belief that he would be pardoned.

In fact, the day before his execution, after he had been playing cards for several hours with his gaolers, he turned

round to them and expressed the opinion that his sentence would be commuted to one of transportation for life, where doubtless his wife and children would join him.

In France, prisoners under sentence of death are never informed of the time chosen for the execution until a few minutes beforehand. Consequently when Carrara said what he did he had no knowledge that he was to suffer the extreme penalty within a few hours of his words.

It was the next morning, Saturday, the 25th of June, 1898, when at 3.30 a.m. the authorities entered his cell to prepare the condemned man for death. He was fast asleep, evidently having remained oblivious to the sound of the gallows being erected at the gates of the prison.

On being awakened he understood the situation with one glance, and completely collapsed. Two stiff glasses of rum had to be forced down his throat before he could rise and dress. During all this time he continued to moan, and when placed on the barber's chair to have his head prepared, he shrank from the scissors and nearly fell off the chair with fright.

Two more glasses of rum were given him, after which he remained alone for some time with his confessor, who gave him absolution. The executioner's assistant then took charge of him and the dreadful procession commenced.

So prostrate was the miserable wretch that he had to be almost carried to the guillotine. Arriving near, the priest attempted to shield Carrara's eyes from the instrument of death, but he was too late. The murderer saw it and nearly fell to the ground.

Not yet was his richly deserved punishment at an end. During the night rain had fallen and deranged the catch of the guillotine. Consequently when the signal was given for the knife to fall, nothing happened, and quite a long time elapsed before the block fell.

So great was the strain that murmurs of horror arose from the spectators, and several Press representatives were seized with hysterical fright.

The crowd which assembled to see Carrara die was enormous; so eager were some women for the sight of death and blood that they clambered up to the roofs of neighbouring houses in order to have an uninterrupted view of the proceedings.

MOTHER OR DAUGHTER ?

Murder.

XI.—MOTHER OR DAUGHTER ?

MME. AND MLLE. BESSARABO

THE trial of Mme. and Mlle. Bessarabo presents the most unusual spectacle of a mother and daughter being charged with the crime of murder, without the court—prosecution, defence, president or jury—being able to discover which of the two was the actual assassin. Despite the efforts of everybody concerned to discover which one was shielding the other, it was not until the very last that the secret was revealed.

The drama of which, like so many life dramas, the trial was the *dénouement*, began one night when two women emerged from out of the rue de Trefle, a small street at right angles to Montmorency. Indistinct in the dying light of an August evening, they were twin shadows, barely recognizable as they turned down the rue de Paris toward the lake at Enghien, yet it was seen that one was tall and angular, while the other possessed a plumper, fuller figure which swayed rhythmically as she walked.

From the rue de Paris they proceeded, by way of the railway bridge, along the Grande Rue d'Enghien, until at last they descended the five paving stones which brought them to the edge of the water.

They were just about to untie the rope which anchored a light skiff to one of the posts when they were seen by the keeper, who quickly approached them.

"There is no boat at this time of night, madame," he called out.

"We have one of our own, thank you," replied one of the women in a hard voice.

"Pardon, Mme. Bessarabo," apologized the keeper. "I did not recognize you."

He stood still and watched the two women complete the freedom of the boat, after which they carefully stepped aboard, the elder of the two to set herself in the stern, the younger at the oars, with which, with a dexterous stroke or two, she set the skiff gliding toward deeper water, and so beyond the gaze of the keeper.

"Whatever can they have to do at this hour of the night, those women?" he murmured to himself as he stroked his chin. Then he remembered that it was none of his business, and, shrugging his shoulders, turned away.

Meanwhile the rowers were approaching midstream.

"One night, just like this, when we rowed together. Do you remember? The stars; the moon; the balmy air——"

"Oh, Maman!" The younger woman spoke with a sob in her voice. "You must not talk—like that——"

"You are right, *petite*. All the perfumes of Arabia will not wash away the blood——"

"Maman . . . Do not speak of that." In an excess of emotion the rower stopped, panting, while the tears dripped from her eyes.

Mme. Bessarabo sneered. "Why do you stop? If you want to go back—go! The worms will eat your heart."

"Maman! Be quiet. It is more than I can bear."

Paule, her daughter, dipped the oars into the water once again, and the boat nosed its way still more toward the middle where it was dark and quiet, yet romantic enough if they had had love in their hearts instead of murder, for though where they were it was still and quiet and shadowy, on the bank they could see, twinkling like a palace, the lights of the Casino d'Enghien, from which drifted gentle strains of infectious music. To one side of it stretched a string of lesser lights, where stood streets of houses; on the other it was black where the dark masses of trees were unrelieved by any light whatsoever.

"Enough, Paule," suddenly hissed Mme. Bessarabo, and obeying instructions the girl ceased in her exercise, so that the swish of the water died away. Directly the boat was still the elder woman stood up in the boat, listening acutely and staring into the darkness surrounding them. There was

nothing to be heard, nothing to be seen. With a slight sigh she bent down, then lifted a parcel from the bottom of the boat, which she held over the water. The next moment there was a slight "plop", a splash of water, and silence once again. With that Mme. Bessarabo sat down and Paule, without a word, but with a distinct shudder and a backward look, turned the boat and rowed back to the shore.

They tied the boat up to the customary post, and with one last furtive glance at the dark shadows which hung like a pall over the lake they turned toward the more cheerful cafés in front of them and walked away.

On the 2nd of August, 1920, M. Thierry, Commissaire of Police for the quarter Saint Georges, was informed by the officer on duty that a chauffeur, one Decroix, desired to make a confidential communication. M. Thierry—not without a sigh, for he, with another officer, had been in the midst of a most interesting discussion—told the *agent de police* to show the man in, and a moment or two later Decroix was sitting down before him.

He had a curious tale to tell, though rather vague and nebulous, for the chauffeur informed the Commissaire that his master, M. Bessarabo, had disappeared. Decroix, so he said, had taken Bessarabo to his house the previous Friday, the 30th of July, and as his master set foot on the pavement he was instructed to call for him on the following morning.

Acting upon his instructions, therefore, at the specified time the next morning Decroix pulled the automobile to a halt outside the Bessarabo *ménage*, but though he waited for some few minutes his master failed to appear.

Thinking that his arrival perhaps had passed unnoticed, the chauffeur alighted from his seat and went into the building to enquire for his master.

He saw only madame, who seemed rather "lost", so the chauffeur explained, and said that her husband had gone away on a voyage.

Knowing his master—a gallant wooer, he said in parenthesis, with a slight smile—this sudden departure seemed more than strange; in fact, considering his injunctions of but a few hours back, it was extraordinary, to say the least of it.

Therefore the chauffeur, possessing a certain perspicacity, began to make enquiries.

He must have had the makings of a detective within him, that chauffeur, for he tracked out several little details of interest. For instance, he discovered that there had been domestic disturbances in the Bessarabo *ménage* ; that Mme. and Mlle. had been taking taxis all over the place ; also that they had taken with them, one journey, a trunk. . . .

M. Thierry, doubtless with memories of Gouffé existent in his mind, decided, on the strength of the chauffeur's revelations, to open a discreet enquiry.

The result of his first findings was to make the Commissaire consider that the enquiry could well be extended, and in consequence he paid a personal visit to the Bessarabo *appartement* to discover whether there was anything peculiar which would bear investigation.

He found very little, as it happened, other than that the rooms were in considerable disorder, but as Mme. Bessarabo was a writer, and as M. Thierry was an old Montmartois, and knew from long experience the peculiarities of literary and artistic folk, he did not attach any importance to this insignificant detail. In fact it is highly probable that he might have dropped the case but for one thing—when Mme. Bessarabo returned the next day, after forty-eight hours of absence, she gave so many intricate and unnecessary explanations of what she had done during that time, that the sagacious magistrate decided it was necessary to have a watch kept upon her.

For instance, what she told him was this : that during the night of 29th or 30th July there had been a violent scene between husband and wife, caused by the fact that as he was taking off his jacket a letter had dropped from one of his pockets, which she had seen and read. It was a letter from another woman, couched in terms of loving endearment. What was supposed to have happened is easily conceived. Anyway, the upshot was that Mme. Bessarabo extracted from her husband a promise that he would break with his mistress, and suggested that he should go away for a time and spend some weeks in repentance and solitude in their villa at Montmorency.

True to his promise he arose at dawn, and having dressed

and shaved, had gone out at eight o'clock, after having previously given his wife a rendezvous at the gare du Nord, both for herself and for her daughter by a former marriage, Mlle. Paule Jacques. Also, she continued, he had instructed them to place in the trunk a few documents of a very, very, delicate nature.

"Well, Madame, what documents?"

"Really, Monsieur, this insistence. . . . I do not know—I dare not . . ."

"Justice must know all, Madame."

"About the documents . . . Ah! Monsieur, what avowals would you have me make! . . . What shame! They were espionage—but it was the intention to destroy them, Monsieur!"

M. Thierry, who was well acquainted with the question of espionage, felt his scepticism awake.

Knowing to the depths his "*quartier Saint-Georges*", he was well aware that to the best of his knowledge Bessarabo was nothing of the sort. He did not tell her so, however, but let her continue the story in her own way, realizing that sooner or later she would entangle herself.

Little knowing what effect she was creating in the mind of the police official, and growing important, this woman in a shrill voice retailed her history, evidently quite charmed with it herself.

She had shut up the documents in question in a hat-box, and had gone out with her daughter to buy cord to tie up the parcel, after which she went to the gare du Nord.

There—a suspicion—how frightful it was—came to them.

"If he were not there, no doubt he had gone to join his mistress, his dactylographe,* Monsieur the Commissaire, and with her gone to Spain.

They called a taxi and drove to the gare de Lyon. Nobody was there—so much the worse—she came back to the gare du Nord. Then she put the trunk into the left-luggage office. One hour after a chauffeur, unknown to them, brought them word to the effect that Mme. Bessarabo was to send the trunk to Nancy, and that her husband would rejoin them at Montmorency.

* Stenographer.

This recitation, complicated and absurd, nevertheless recalled the story of the chauffeur concerning a trunk having been taken out from the left-luggage office.

This questionable story had the result of putting the two women at the disposition of the law, as represented by M. Bonin, a lawyer then very much the vogue, who was examiner in the cases of Landru and Girard.

Naturally the first care of M. Bonin was to find the trunk.

It was found at Nancy and opened. The lesson of Gabrielle Bompard had served to some purpose. Bent double, wrapped in a waterproof cloth, the forehead pierced by a bullet, was a corpse—that of Bessarabo !

The subsequent examination was not easy, and M. Bonin realized that the law had to deal with a hard case.

Born at Lyon in 1868, Marie-Louise-Victorine Grones, of an excellent but ruined family, herself once a pupil of the "Sacred Heart", had married, about 1895, Paul Jacques, a French lawyer established in Mexico, who died in 1915 in mysterious circumstances—a suicide it was said. Of that marriage there were two daughters, one of whom had married in Mexico in 1916, and the other, Paule, who stayed with her mother, and whom, accusation said, was probably her accomplice.

The widow, apparently easily consolable, married again one year afterward, in 1916, a Rumanian Israelite, Weissman, who called himself Bessarabo. Subsequently the household removed to Paris, and there she achieved one of her ambitions, namely, that of surrounding herself with literary people.

In her salon at La Bruyère Square she held continual receptions—here was, in fact, a literary salon, the last edition of a world where one was bored to death !

A middle-aged lady and a literary salon ! The combination was too much for the unfortunate Bessarabo. *Tête-à-tête* with his pretty typist in his office in the rue de la Victoire, he forgot, in the click-clack of the writing machine, the far-fetched situation in the square La Bruyère. Unfortunately for himself, he was not as discreet as he ought to have been ; before long Mme. Bessarabo became aware of the pretty little romance which was taking place in the rue de la Victoire. The result

was all one might expect, and the echo of her violent vituperation percolated outside the four walls of their conjugal bedroom.

Jealousy—a mysterious trunk—a corpse ! It was a thread, and this thread bound so well the guilty ones that the mother made a confession, but one cunningly walled in with reticence and enamelled with lies.

Yes, she had killed her husband, but it was because of maternal love. That was to say it was not so much because her happiness was menaced by her husband's fascination for his typist, but because Bessarabo, in his turn, had threatened retaliation on Paule if she attempted to make any move in the matter. Therefore, unknown to her daughter, she killed her infamous husband and placed his body in the trunk. As for the instrument with which she had committed the crime, this she threw into the Lake Enghien. This story was confirmed by the one retailed by Paule.

It was further elicited from her that the two had intended to flee to Mexico ; in fact, their places had already been booked on the next boat.

As to Paule's share in the crime, she did not deny having fetched the trunk, nor having counterfeited the writing of her stepfather on the famous ticket which they pretended had been brought to them by the unknown chauffeur.

As has been elsewhere mentioned in this book, French justice takes little count of time, so the preliminary examination of these two women dragged on for eight months, after which, much to everyone's surprise, Mme. Bessarabo suddenly recanted. Naturally it was not only too late, but positively hopeless, for in the meantime the police had established the fact that the fatal shot had been fired at a short distance, probably while the victim was lying in bed asleep. This happened on either the night of Friday, the 29th, or Saturday, the 30th of July. Moreover, it was proved that he had been alone in the room with his wife and stepdaughter ; that when the trunk was taken downstairs by the concierge and placed on the taxi, it contained only a corpse.

If more proof were needed it was in the fact that there existed a further motive, in that a trust of 600,000 francs, to be drawn on the morning of the 31st and kept jealously guarded until the 30th in the notebook of the unhappy man,

had disappeared. In the circumstances the first judgment of the law, as represented by the examining magistrate, was that murder, wilful and premeditated, had been committed.

Following her recantation on the 16th June, Mme. Bessarabo made a third version of the death to a witness, M. Georges Gérardot, *industriel* and a former secretary to M. Bessarabo. She said that the corpse found in the trunk was not that of her husband at all; that Bessarabo was a spy and was in New York engaged on espionage.

This story she repeated before M. Bonin and her two advocates, Maîtres de Moro-Giaffere, and Ernest-Charles Cuvillier-Thérítier, adding that "the body had not been identified, neither she nor her daughter having been present at the opening of the trunk."

The *juge* pointed out that the brother of M. Bessarabo had gone to Nancy with Dr. Paul and had definitely identified the corpse. Nevertheless, she persisted in her latest story.

On the 23rd the *juge* received a peculiar parcel at his office. Previously he had ordered the exhumation of Mme. Bessarabo's first husband, and this having been done the officials forwarded to him a hat which had been buried with the suicide, in which was an envelope containing eight letters, dated the day before death, plainly stating his intention of committing suicide. In view of the fact, however, that the doctor who had attended the first husband had made no mention of these in his report, and that Mme. Jacques had never mentioned them, M. Bonin ordered them to be examined by handwriting experts.

On the 24th witnesses came forward to affirm that M. Bessarabo had several times owned to a fear of being murdered, while M. Gabrielle Bede, of Mexico, effectively disproved the spy theory and explained that Paule's hatred of her stepfather, which he described as being implacable, was due to the fact that he chased her fiancé from his house for *indélicatesse*.

In the meantime other witnesses appeared from different directions and the *juge* was able to piece together a few more details of Mme. Bessarabo's life, and her first husband's suicide. It was learned, for instance, that M. Jacques had more than once expressed his intention of committing suicide, his reason being that it was more safe to die by his own hand than

by that of his wife, for Mme. Bessarabo had several times conspired to kill him. In fact it was definitely proved that she had tried to poison him—at first by some virulent poison, later by a slower process. In the end, therefore, Jacques saved her the bother and shot himself in the right temple.

From Paris, as has been related, Mme. Jacques returned to Mexico, where she married Bessarabo. It did not take the new husband long to discover that he had married a tartar. Possessing a violent temper which, at a moment's notice, burst into a paroxysm of seething fury, the *ménage* was anything but a peaceful one upon such occasions as she allowed it free rein. Moreover she was a spendthrift of the worst type, and when he naturally remonstrated with her now and again, as was surely his privilege, it was merely to encourage her to let loose a flow of hot words.

Can it be a matter for wonder, therefore, that with such a wife to share his recreative hours, who never let out of her sight his stepdaughter who hated him, he sought for more congenial distractions. In Paris one is never at much of a difficulty in finding consolation, and Bessarabo found it near at hand, at his elbow in fact, for he took care that his stenographers were young and lissome, and had full red lips which parted in a smile, not thin red lines which could only tighten ominously.

As usual there were not wanting friends to pass on to Mme. Bessarabo the glad news that her husband had found a *petite amie*. The effect can easily be imagined. Probably with memories of the easy—and safe—manner which she had used to assist her late husband to depart this life, one night Mme. Bessarabo made an attempt to strangle her spouse, and whether her intention were really serious or not, at any rate he bore the marks for several days afterward. Nevertheless, even at that time, he did not hesitate to tell friends that he had more to fear from his stepdaughter's hate than from his wife's jealousy.

On the 10th of June, 1922—nearly a year after their recantation and twenty months after their arrest—Mme. Bessarabo and Mme. Jacques were tried, M. Marcel, Advocate-General, prosecuting, Me. de Moro-Giafferi defending the widow, and Me. Raymond Hubert the stepdaughter.

The trial began with one question trembling upon the lips

of everyone present. Who was guilty of the murder—mother or daughter? Interest, however, soon displaced curiosity, for it was proved that while the dead man had amused himself with a succession of stenographers, Mme. Bessarabo was herself not so guiltless in the matter of stolen fruit, for she had had lovers to help wile away the idle hours. The great sensation of the day, however, was caused by Paule who, with a voice full of significance and with an appealing glance at her mother, announced that the whole affair could have been satisfactorily explained but that the explanation was shrouded by a secret which she could not disclose.

The effect of this—one might almost say the *studied* effect—was instantly to prejudice the court against the mother. Here was a young girl who was conscious of her mother's guilt and yet, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, was willing to suffer possible consequences in order to shield her. Yet, as one of the press-men aptly told his readers :

Rien ne pèse tant qu'un secret.
Le porter loin est difficile aux dames,*

and gleefully prognosticated that it would be a secret no longer by the end of the trial.

So soon, therefore, in the proceedings it seemed that Paule was innocent, Mme. Bessarabo guilty. Comparing the two accused as they stood in the dock, this impression gained ground, for it was so difficult to conceive that Paule, so youthfully round and winsome, so soft and clinging, so elegant and chic, could have had any hand in such an atrocious murder; so easy to imagine Mme. Bessarabo guilty of any crime, for she was thin and almost scraggy, her eyes were cold and hard, and her hat was of a long-forgotten fashion.

Nevertheless, effects and prejudices would not convict the mother or acquit the daughter, and Me. de Moro-Giafferi with his fearful, nervous, jumpy manner played for his client's life like a cunning angler, and Me. Hubert struggled for the freedom of Paule.

It must have been a strange game played by the two *avocats*,

* Nothing is heavier than a secret.
It is difficult for women to carry it far.

for to the prosecution they presented a firm, allied front ; yet if it came to a question of accepting the blame, at once they were fighting each other. Allies and rivals, at one and the same time !

During the days which followed many strange and wondrous characters stood in the witness-box—among whom were Mlles. Mollot and Cazenave, successive stenographers and mistresses to the murdered man.

There was a M. Pillement who, scarcely understanding the case at all, said what he could for the defence, blindly devoted for a few comforting letters which had cheered him up during the black days of the war.

There was M. Chapelot who propounded his sublime ideals which he believed to be more noble than marriage. There was Mme. MacKensie whose affection for the accused expressed itself in so ridiculous a manner that she became rather pathetic.

Mlle. Aurel, for whom "literature only was life, and life only literature", gave a long speech on the "course of true love". Another witness, a relative of the victim, insisted upon representing Bessarabo as such a minor saint that he became a figure of fun.

Other witnesses for the defence played their parts so well that in the end they became an indictment ; those who spoke for the prosecution said so much that they almost succeeded in whitewashing the guilty.

However, there was still no answer to the question—who was guilty ? To which belonged the hand that had committed the evil deed ? Who was the accomplice only ? As time went on, however, it was foreseen that one thing would be certain : Mme. Bessarabo would be brought in guilty. There remained only Paule ; and Paule let it be understood that she was innocent, even if she did not say so in as many actual words, even if her guiltlessness was far from being evident.

The newspaper men, shrewd and discriminating from their very training, were not satisfied with Paule's evidence. To them she did not ring true, and they did not hesitate to tell their readers so, with all the freedom which they are allowed in France.

Nevertheless, later on—and still the mysterious secret was unrevealed—the widow ceased to defend herself ; all her

efforts became concentrated upon seeing that her daughter was acquitted.

The last sitting arrived ; everything had been said, and murder insinuated against them both ; it seemed that after all Paule might suffer. Upon that day there was a *coup de théâtre* ; without warning Paule broke down, no longer able to stand the strain, the thought of punishment.

"Paule Jacques," said the President, M. Gilbert, in his fatherly manner, "have you nothing to add in your own defence ?"

Then Paule, faltering, arose to her feet. In a voice strained and stifled by sobs she spoke :

"I am innocent ! Listen, I will tell you all. That night I found that I was locked in. I called and Maman came and opened the door for me.

"It was then that I went into the dressing-room and I saw through the glass the figure of my stepfather, stretched across the bed.

"She said to me then : 'Silence, Paulette, it is nothing. I have only done justice. It was either him or me, do you understand—Paulette ! So that I fired—I have only done justice !'

"Then Maman sent me to fetch the trunk at the sixth story."

She stopped suddenly and sobbed—the echo of it travelled round that quiet court.

"Gentlemen of the jury," she continued after a pause, "I was not able to touch '*that*'."

"*That*" was the corpse !

This "*that*" sent a thrill through the court, the jury, the judges. Such repulsion from death was surely such as could be felt only by one truly innocent !

From that moment one would almost have thought that Mme. Bessarabo was only too glad to bring the whole blame down upon herself : she provoked the jury, insulted her civil lawyer. She seemed drunk with sacrifice, intoxicated with maternal love, and did not neglect one word nor one movement which was calculated to betray her guilt, her daughter's innocence.

On the 23rd of June, 1922, Paule was acquitted, while Mme. Bessarabo was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment.

When Paule heard the wonderful news her joy was unbounded. Perhaps forgetting for the moment her mother's misfortune, she waved kisses to the jury, smiled to the judge and kissed her counsel, all the while laughing happily. Even Mme. Bessarabo, just before she was led down to the cells, seemed pleased, for in a speech to the jury she thanked them for granting her daughter liberty.

This, then, was the end of the Bessarabo case. At the present moment somewhere in the world the mother is working her nails to the quick ; somewhere else is her daughter as free as the wind which whistles round her ears. Murder is a ghastly crime, and Mme. Bessarabo more than deserves her punishment which, in the circumstances, was considered moderate, but at the same time, considering the part in the affair which Paule undoubtedly took according to her own confession, it does not appear that the scales of justice were balanced as equally as they might have been.

A ROYAL INTRIGUE

Mystery.

XII.—A ROYAL INTRIGUE

PRINCE DE CONDÉ. MADAME DE FEUCHÈRES

SOPHIE DAWES was the daughter of a drunken fisherman and was born at St. Helens, Isle of Wight, in the year 1795. Some of the earlier years of her life she spent as a fishermaid ; subsequently she was brought up in Ryde workhouse.

From there she moved to the residence of Clift, the agriculturalist, in which household she worked as a chambermaid. Later, while still quite young, she had an intrigue with an officer of Chelsea, which for this girl, beautiful and entirely immoral, was the beginning of a long series of amorous adventures. Evidently a life of love was one which appealed to this hot-blooded girl, for she continued to lead this life until one day when, barely turned twenty, she entered into a liaison with one who was of no lesser rank than a royal prince of France.

She was at that time working in the mansion of Mrs. Martin, who was a fashionable London "trader", and it was during one of her many *introductory* parties that Sophie and her new lover first met.

There were many titled people, as well as gallants and beaux present in the large salon, brilliant with the light of many candles, glistening with the newness of its gold. Even if it were far too sumptuously furnished for good taste, its imperfections were counterbalanced by the swarm of beauties who fluttered round the guests nonchalantly lounging in easy chairs and cushioned sofas.

Nevertheless it was quite a cheerful party ; everyone chattered gaily, or smoked ; among the latter being His Royal Highness, the duc de Bourbon, son of the Prince de Condé.

"Do you intend to return to your own country for Christmas, my dear Marquis?" he asked of his neighbour, who was partaking liberally of snuff.

"London is too agreeable at the moment for me to dream of doing so"—and the Marquis, with a twinkling eye, gazed round him—"but if your Highness would do me the honour to accept my invitation——?"

"For seven years now I have given up all worldly pleasures——"

"The better to indulge his secret vices," murmured a disdainful dandy who stood near by.

"Take a care, my friend Brummel," whispered an officer clothed in an ox-blood uniform. "It is not because you know the art of tying cravats that you must lose respect towards His Royal Highness, for the moment the guest of loyal England——"

"God forbid that I should abuse the laws of hospitality. I know as well as you the perpetual mourning which the duke maintains for his son, murdered in the ditches of Vincennes by the *mameluks** of Bonaparte, but you must allow that he drags it into some very queer places!"

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Nevertheless, it is necessary at times to shut one's eyes——"

Presently some complaisant maids offered round refreshments of all sorts—ices, lemonades, port. The duc was helping himself when Mrs. Martin approached:

"Will not your Highness play this evening?" the hostess asked her princely visitor, dropping an exaggerated Court curtsy.

"If my dear Marquis of Winchelsea would care to partner me at whisk——"

"At whist, monseigneur, at whist."

"I can never remember that word—oh, well! I'll let myself be persuaded."

Whereupon many of the company passed into a little salon next door which was plunged into semi-obscurity, for the candelabra, shaded with green, diffused their light only on the tables where cards already awaited the players.

* A Turco-Egyptian militia formed originally of slaves, which mastered Egypt, was defeated by Napoleon at the Battle of the Pyramids, 1798, and exterminated by Mohamet Ali in 1811.

"Monseigneur is wrong to play," whispered in the duc's ear his faithful *valet de chambre*, Guy, who accompanied him to all the fine parties. "There is something here better than all your beautiful ladies ; there is a jewel—a pearl which you have failed to notice."

Inclining his head toward a corner of the room, he showed his master a beautiful servant who was arranging some chairs. She was tall, superbly formed, and possessed a round face with features, if somewhat vulgar, at least well pronounced, and above all, fine blue eyes, whose bold look rested on the group.

"Oddsfish, the exquisite darling !"

"What are you looking at over there, monseigneur ?" asked the marquis, then, answering himself, continued, "Why, that's Sophie. So we are going to be rivals."

"Rivals ! Why should good friends be rivals ? I'll play you to decide which of us shall have the little beauty."

"Agreed ! She makes a fine stake ! You must be careful not to have a misere hand."

"Undoubtedly she is a prize worth winning." In the silence the players cut, while Sophie disappeared disdainfully, notwithstanding that she knew exactly what was happening. In tense silence the two men played out their game, until at the end of thirty minutes' time one of the men sat back and smiled.

"I have won," proclaimed the Prince. The marquis ruefully nodded his head, so the duc turned eagerly to his valet : "Guy, go and collect this Sophie for me," he ordered.

"But, Monseigneur," protested Mrs. Martin, "she is only a servant—there are many ladies here——"

"What matter ! My ancestor, King Henri, was not so particular."

Thus twenty minutes later on that beautiful winter's night, Sophie, quite unmoved by her good fortune, and accompanied by the duke, arrived at the residence of the exiled Condé, Wanstead House, situated not far from London.

Life at Wanstead House was monotonous, so much so that until now it had easily bored the duc de Bourbon, who shared this property with his father, the former general of the army of Condé. Mindful of his rank the duc lived there surrounded by a little court ; one of its most beautiful ornaments was the young woman, Adèle Michelot, a natural daughter of the

duke and a danseuse of the Opera, Catherine Michelot. She was known, however, as "Mademoiselle de Bourbon".

Whatever the social standing of the men in this loose little Court, there was certainly no feminine personality of rank, for the Duchesse de Bourbon, Louise d'Orléans, married at fourteen, had separated six years later from her fickle spouse and was living in France, though this fact, incidentally, had not deterred the duc from defending, with a high hand, his wife's honour, by a duel with the Comte d'Artois, which caused widespread interest. Another of the duc's family, his youngest sister, Louise de Bourbon, lived in the English Convent of the emigrant Benedictines, and subsequently became "Soeur Marie-Joseph de la Miséricorde".

In these circumstances it was simple enough for this Don Juan of fifty-five years of age to keep beside him his latest conquest without any fear of offending the proprieties. At the same time, however, he could not have been altogether careless of public opinion, for he had her well educated in the usages of polite society, even to a smattering of Latin and Greek, which served to polish the beauty ; and if Sophie later earned her reward it must be admitted that she deserved it, for it cannot have been easy for the erstwhile fisher lass to have mastered easily the two dead languages. Thus in a very short time Sophie became a lady, in whom no one would have been able to recognize the chambermaid of yesterday.

Despite the boredom of the Court, Sophie clung to her royal lover, until there arrived the day when it was necessary for the duc to return to France, in consequence of his father having died the previous 13th of May, 1818, and with him went Sophie, determined at all costs not to lose her lover.

Once back in his native land the duc re-assumed the title of Prince de Condé, with which was entailed the sinecure of Master of the Royal Household, and took possession of an immense hereditary fortune of more than eighty million francs.

In view of the fact that the duc had returned to a real Court, where certain conventions had to be recognized, it now became necessary for Sophie to find some complaisant individual who would accept the responsibility of a troubled past, and secure her an *entrée* into court society. She therefore encouraged the advances of a Monsieur Adrien-Victor Feuchères, an

officer in the army, and accorded him her hand, but only after the cunning woman had passed herself off as none other than the natural daughter of the Prince. The marriage was celebrated in London, the 6th of August, 1818, in the Protestant church of St. Martin, and subsequently at the Catholic Chapel of the Spanish Embassy.

As a result of the duc's beautiful assertion : "*I have known this lady since her tenderest childhood—any man of honour may marry her !*" the unfortunate man found himself granted a baron's coronet.

However, it was not in his honour that his rank was so summarily raised, for behind it all was the fact that the new name hid Sophie's past, while entitling her husband to receive a post in the Palais Bourbon : an effective camouflage, permitting Sophie to live under the same roof as the Prince.

For the moment she was a *femme du monde*, but she knew too well that without money to carry through the rôle in a successful manner honour is merely an empty vessel. Conscious of this she saw the prey before her—the fortune of the Condé's, even if it were just a portion, ever so small !

She was sensible enough to realize that there could only be a small share allotted to her, so she looked round, seeking to whom the major part of the cake should be ceded. She did not consider this to be a particularly hard task, so in this formal Court of Louis XVIII, in this circle of scarcely awakened sleepers, returned from emigration, who had neither learned anything nor forgotten anything, she sought out someone to aid her in the ambitious intrigue upon which she was entering, all sails unfurled.

There seemed little danger of anyone thwarting her ; the duc was feeble and lazy, and lived only in memories. If he went to the Tuileries, it was because he was constrained and forced ; while the Royal Family knew too well how utterly sincere was the attachment of the last of the Condés to his legitimate monarch ever to doubt that his goods would go to anyone other than the children of his king.

However, in the shadow, watching, one supporting the other, there were two figures : a lame and cynical old man who could no longer count his treacherous plots, and a man, corpulent and voluntarily effaced—Prince Talleyrand-Périgord and M. the duc d'Orléans, the future Louis-Philippe, whose

hereditary ambitions were limitless. Easily reading the character of the Baroness de Feuchères, these two expert diplomats believed her to be an ideal instrument with which to forward their plots, and so, in their minds, they decided to be the people for whom Sophie was obviously in search.

Before proceeding any further in this game of human chess, the relationship between the two parties, the Condés and the Orléans, might well be briefly explained. During the eighteenth century these were the two most powerful families in France, and until the first revolution they had, despite their natural jealousy of one another, maintained more or less amicable relations, and even became intermarried, Louis Henri Joseph, the duc de Bourbon (Sophie's lover) having wedded the Princess Louise of Orléans, as already mentioned.

During the Republic, however, Louis Philippe, duc d'Orléans, emigrated to the United States and did not return to France until Napoleon Bonaparte was firmly established. Once back in Europe he was reconciled with the exiled Louis XVIII,* and stoutly declared his loyalty to the King, but when asked to join the army of Condé to fight against France he refused decisively.

This, in conjunction with the always existent rivalry of the two powerful elements, caused a breach between the Condés and the Orléans.

It can easily be understood why there was apparently very little hope of the duc making his will in favour of any of the Orléans family, and why it was necessary for the duc d'Orléans to intrigue to secure it, particularly so as it was rumoured that the Condé money would be left to the duc de Bordeaux.†

The first move was made by the duc d'Orléans, who wrote to the Prince de Condé asking him to carry Aumale, his fourth son, to the baptismal font. On the 9th May, 1822, the duc de Bourbon undertook to become Aumale's godfather, and wrote to Orléans as follows :

“You have authorized me to choose those who are to share the honour. Three ladies of my house, Mesdames de Quesnay, de Feuchères and de Choulot, who have been

* Louis XVIII died in 1815, and was succeeded by Charles X.

† The grandson of Charles X.

presented at Court, but have not yet had the honour to be presented to you. If it were not braving etiquette, this would be a very flattering occasion for them, one which would make an epoch in their lives."

Right away, the Orléans and the baronne joined forces, and instructed by her two mentors the baronne began to manœuvre for a reconciliation between the Condés and the Orléans, and in the meanwhile arranged to have a clean sweep in the house. All the old servitors of the duc whom she considered might be likely to interfere in her plans, she chased off one after the other, the first being "Mademoiselle de Bourbon", who had meantime married the Comte de Rully, the first gentleman of the Chamber to her father-in-law, in whose place M. Frain, baron de la Villegontier, was designated.

Little by little her enterprise succeeded, but in doing so it was necessary for her continually to meet M. de Talleyrand, to the great disgust of the Vicomte Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, who denounced the affair to the King as "some scandalous intrigue".

She was prepared for their tactics. If she did meet M. de Talleyrand, so she said, it was in order to marry her niece, Matilda Dawes, to the Marquis de Chabannes-La Palice, nephew of the old diplomat, and in this statement she could not be accused of departing from the truth, for, without losing sight of her principal objective, the baronne was endeavouring, like a fond parent, to provide for her family, and it might well be said she succeeded. In the course of her schemes James, the brother of Matilda, was created a baron, and received 200,000 francs, together with the domain of Flassans, which, as it well might, permitted him to marry the daughter of Admiral Manby, while her sister, Elizabeth, with a dowry of 100,000 francs, was to marry Capitaine Thanaron, a native of Provence and a compatriot of General the Baron Lambot, a charming native of Toulon, to whom the favours and protection of the baronne had been worth the tabs of first aide-de-camp and the *secretariat des commandements* of the Prince.

Under this family cover "the scandalous intrigue" as revealed by the worthy Sosthène went full speed ahead, until

eventually the question of conferring the heritage was no longer worried about—at least by the Orléans ; it would go to the duc d'Aumale. There was only one question about which they cared : Would it be in the capacity of *légataire universel*,* or in the capacity of an adopted son ?

Both of these solutions were distasteful to the old loyalist gentleman.

“No, never !” he cried proudly, “never shall the name, the title of Prince de Condé, be carried by the Orléans.”

“Never ?” replied to herself the baronne, who did much in her letters to try and “touch by degrees the heart of her benefactor on a subject which always aroused painful memories”.

Cajoled by the Orléans the baronne intensified the pressure :

“The scandal-mongers,” she wrote to the Prince, “do not cease to spread around that I want to profit of the tender friendship which you have for me, to seize your fortune. The King and the Royal Family wish you to make a choice of a Prince of your family to inherit one day your name and your fortune. It is believed that I alone am the only obstacle to the accomplishment of this wish. This position is so painful to me that I can support it no longer, and I beg of you to put an end to this cruel position in which I am placed, by adopting an heir.

“After much thought, my opinion is that the young duc d'Aumale is the most entitled to this high favour.”

There was another reason why the baronne redoubled her efforts ; that was because of an event, tragic for her, which had deprived her of her *entrée* at Court. During her married life there had been between she and her husband a continual succession of domestic disagreements, so much so that one fine day Sophie, beside herself with fury, cried out to the colonel :

“Well ! I am not the duc’s daughter. I am his mistress !”

The scandal which followed can easily be imagined. In

* In French law an executor classed as *légataire universel*, after settling the various legacies stated in the will, takes for himself the entire remaining properties.

anger de Feuchères raised his riding-whip against her. There were blows and cries. Hearing this noise the duc de Bourbon ran to the scene and separated the combatants, but unfortunately the damage had already been done.

With commendable elegance, the gallant husband accepted the blow to his pride without flinching. In spite of the duc's pleading, he resigned from his post, gave back to his wife the money which she had brought him, and went to fight in Spain under the flag of Monseigneur le duc d'Angoulême, having "for his sole fortune his sword". Anyhow, before leaving he left some good advice.

"Beware of her," he said to the duc, speaking of his wife. "She is capable of anything, of any excess."

Of any excess—perhaps he was right, but her debauch, however violent it might have been, did not make her forget the accomplishment of that to which she was pledged—fortune and honours. It was in vain that the highest personages of the Court fought to prevent, after the scandal of the separation which had revealed her true position, her showing her face at the Court. She was deprived of her *entrées* to the King, so be it! Nevertheless, all those who were opposed to her presence at the Tuileries, at their head Cardinal de Latil, the King's confessor, re-opened their doors to her under the pressure of the duc d'Orléans, finally pledged, in the person of his son d'Aumale.

Eventually, the Prince gave in to so much continual persuasion—some say to so much violence—for it was said that he had gone as far as to exclaim one day, "Scum! Schemer! It is an awful and horrible thing to thus hold the knife at my throat to make me do a thing my great repugnance for which you very well know. Well, why do you not bury the knife at once? Bury it——!"

He pleaded in vain with the duc d'Orléans to ask Mme. de Feuchères to leave him in peace, which the future Louis-Philippe, like the false hypocrite he was, did before witnesses: chided in public but encouraged in secret; the baronne neither retired, nor held a truce, nor gave respite to the victim whom she had selected as her objective.

The 30th of August, 1829, saw her victory. In order to secure a little peace, M. de Bourbon-Condé ended by writing, with his own hand, his will, by which he bequeathed his

former servitors 250,000 francs income, named the duc d'Aumale his *légataire universel*, and reserved for Sophie his "*pavillon*" of the Palais-Bourbon, the château and the park of St. Leu, plus property and divers holdings to a total of twelve million francs.

In less than twenty years the little servant of Piccadilly had made some progress. But to conquer is nothing, the test is to hold—and she was one to stop at nothing—not even death.

The first days of July in the year 1830 were particularly hot and trying to the ageing Prince. In the meanwhile dandies in nankeen breeches, grisettes in dress of jaconet were hurrying to reach the environs of Paris, in particular Montmorency, celebrated at that time for its cherries and its donkeys.

Deciding that their example was one well worth following, the Prince de Condé left the Palais-Bourbon, to go and reign over his subjects from his château at St. Leu, where its green park, noisy with streams and waterfalls, dotted with fish ponds, strewn with rocks and landscapes *à l'anglaise*, offered to the old duc a setting both charming and tormenting, one which reminded him of his youth, nourished with sentimentality.

But, if the setting had remained the same, what a change in the people! Gone were the old servitors, for one by one the baronne de Feuchères had caused them to disappear in order to replace them by her own creatures: the couple Dupré, valet and *femme de chambre*; the abbé Briant, a priest needy and deceitful, playing at one and the same time the rôles of chaplain and private secretary to this British pompadour; Lecomte, a former coiffeur of the baronne promoted to the rank of *valet de chambre* to the duc; James de Flassans, and General Lambot. The only one left of the old household was the faithful Manoury, called Noury, his *valet de chambre* ever since 1814.

The 25th of July saw acted a comedy in which Mme. de Feuchères excelled as though born to the rôle. The duc d'Orléans and all the family of the heir Aumale were received by the Prince, to all intents and purposes assembled together to give themselves up to an enjoyable holiday, but there seems little doubt that the object of the gathering was to talk business, which was not surprising, for, as a general rule, as far as the Orléans were concerned, pleasures of that kind were always occasions to speak of personal interests.

The château of St. Leu was, and always had been, the object of the covetousness of Mlle. d'Orléans, the sister of the duc. Unfortunately for her, Mme. de Feuchères, already named in the ducal will as the future inheritor of the domain, was not satisfied to wait for that distant date, and at that time was on the point of forcing the duc to give it to her as an immediate gift.

In the circumstances, for Mlle. d'Orléans to obtain the château, it was necessary for her to buy it from the duc, knowing well that the purchase money would eventually find its way into the pockets of the baronne, who was making her lover demand the sum of 5,000,000 francs. The Orléans would only offer 4½ millions. They were on the point of agreeing, when, two days later, the *Trois Glorieuses* commenced, and the monarchy of France was once again thrown into the melting-pot.

The story of the Three Glorious Days is soon told : it was the second revolution, this time led by the middle classes. There was spasmodic fighting during the three days, until, as usual, the revolutionaries were thrown back upon the barricades. Nevertheless they came out the victors, and Charles X, King of France, was deposed, and the flag of the Bourbon for ever humbled in the dust, while Louis-Philippe, duc d'Orléans, whose son Prince Condé had made his heir, was elected as King, and thus earned the reward which was due to him for his eternal Machiavellian tactics.

Consternation reigned at St. Leu. The Prince de Condé lived again the dramatic hours of his youth—the taking of the Bastille, his emigration ; and at the very moment when everything was calming down, the tragic fusillade of Vincennes which had mown down his son, the last of his race.

Each despatch which arrived from Paris increased his anguish : the flight of the King, the pillage of St. Cloud, and, above all, the fall of the resuscitated monarchy of which he had been one of the last upholders.

Nothing could comfort him, not even the note which the new King of the French—that title which recalled to him the commencing downfall of Louis XVI—sent to him on the 8th of August :

“To-morrow the Chambers assemble to receive the oath which I am required to take, and it will give me much pleasure if you will occupy there the place near me which is yours by right. . . .”

This was the very position which he had occupied six years ago, at Rheims, by the side of another King, Charles X, in the duc's eyes the only legitimate monarch! His entourage entreated him in vain to attend the Chamber, but despite the vehemence with which they pleaded, it was useless; nothing would make him break his oath of allegiance, nothing could persuade him to leave St. Leu save only to rejoin his sovereign in exile, which he forthwith determined to do, and in spite of the reassuring cajoleries of some, the brutalities of others, nothing and nobody succeeded in persuading him to remain in France, neither the usurping Orléans nor the intriguing de Feuchères. He prepared for his departure and ordered his treasurer, M. de Surval, to send him a million francs in banknotes, and through another source he ordered a carriage to await him at Noisselles, near Ecoen, on the way to Beaumont.

Unfortunately for him, an indiscretion on the part of Mme. de la Villegontier revealed to Mme. de Feuchères the plan of escape. In her turn she caused the Rothschilds to remit her a draft of half a million on London and ordered a post-chaise to be ready between Montmorency and Isle-Adam, two leagues from St. Leu—this in case the duc succeeded in evading her. To superintend is nothing, to foresee is everything! A consummate tactician, this Englishwoman took into consideration the senile feebleness of the Prince, and consequently used upon him every means of pressure to make him remain at St. Leu—to such an extent, in fact, that the unfortunate man came out of his room, shoeless, one eye closed up, crying aloud for Manoury, his *valet de chambre*. In this state he encountered M. Obry, his head game-keeper.

“See,” he said to him, “in what a state she has made me,” and repeated several times:

“Madame de Feuchères is a wicked woman!”

Little by little he recovered himself; therefore to M. de la Villegontier, he said that he banged himself on his bed-

table while sleeping ; to Manoury, that his foot slipped and that he had fallen. Nevertheless, no one was duped by the duc's excuses ; they merely smiled significantly. Meanwhile the baronne left the château, but not without slipping under the Prince's door a letter which disquietened him very considerably, so much so that as the night approached the old man asked Manoury to sleep at the door of his room, to the astonishment of the servitor, who objected, holding that such an order should be given to the *valet de chambre de service*—Lecomte. The master, anxious not to let his fears be seen, continued :

“Oh no, we will just have to leave it !” and gave the order to get ready to rejoin Chantilly as soon as possible. At Chantilly he knew he would be more secure than at St. Leu, for there his room could be entered only by passing through that of the *valet de chambre de service*. From there, too, he knew he could more easily leave for another country.

In the meantime, while the duc anxiously awaited the day when he could flee, Mme. de Feuchères returned to St. Leu and continued to use the high hand which up till then had served her so well, though not without first having had some distractions with a superb under-officer of the gendarmerie. On the morning of the 26th of August, however, she went too far, for the Prince did not hesitate to turn her out of his room, and to emphasize his enfranchisement he had, in the afternoon, a long interview with an emissary of Charles X, namely, the Comte de Cossé-Brisac.

The comte had come, it was said, to persuade M. de Condé to remake his will in favour of the duc de Bordeaux, at present deprived of his royal heritage ! The baronne could quite believe this, and her fears were confirmed by the disdain which her old protector heaped upon her at dinner.

Having seen the Comte de Cossé-Brisac to his carriage, the Prince returned to the salon, all the while talking to his suite of the touching *fête* which his villagers had given him the day before. Afterward he gave himself up to whist, which he played with Mme. de Feuchères and M. de la Ville-gontier and de Préjean, and with them discussed the games with a rare presence of mind. Toward eleven o'clock they finished and he retired to his bedroom with Lecomte and his surgeon, M. Bonnie,

"At what time," asked the valet, "am I to present myself before your Highness?"

"At eight o'clock," replied the Prince peacefully, who, before getting into bed, accomplished the daily rites of his bed-going: winding up his hunting-watch, putting his keys on the mantelshelf and making a remembrance knot in his handkerchief. Having completed his toilet he wished them good-night on the stroke of midnight, then blew out his candles and got into bed.

The following morning at eight o'clock precisely, as he had been ordered, Lecomte, with his service key, opened the door of the antechamber, a room in which was, beside the door of the Prince's room, a glass door concealing a private staircase. The valet knocked on the folding doors of the bedroom, but there was no reply.

The man then went to open the doors, but strangely enough, quite contrary to the habit of the Prince, the bolt was shot, and to the valet's knocks there answered only an eerie silence. M. Bonnie, coming along unexpectedly, knocked in his turn, but still the same silence. Uneasy, the two men ran to M. de la Villegontier, the first gentleman of the chamber. He, however, had gone out, so they went down to the ground floor where was the room of the baronne. She was still in bed.

"I will go up," she said to them. "When he hears my voice he will reply. If not, the door will have to be forced. He may have had an attack, in which case a little blood-letting might do him good."

By this time the whole château was in an uproar.

Mme. de Feuchères, arriving at the Prince's room, quietened everyone, then she called loudly:

"Monseigneur! It is I, Monseigneur! Open the door, Monseigneur!"

Still no reply, so Manoury, by dint of striking the inner panel with a lump of iron, broke it, and through this narrow opening slid into the room, followed by Lecomte and M. Bonnie.

They ran to the bed—it was empty! They next rushed to the window; a feeble light was filtering through the shutters, against which a human form seemed to lean while listening to the matutinal song of the lark. They opened the shutters;

in the bright light of the morning a ghastly tragedy revealed itself. The Prince was hanging from the sash-fastening of the window, having been strangled by two handkerchiefs tied together. The tips of his feet touched the ground, his knees were half-bent, and his head had fallen forward on his chest.

The whole household was sorrow-stricken; the room echoed with the sound of tears and sobs. Then in the midst of this tumult Mme. de Feuchères let fall a strange reflection:

"It is really a good job that the Prince has died in this way. If he had died in his bed, it would have been said that I had poisoned him——"

In due course an *instruction* on the death of the Prince de Condé, duc de Bourbon, was held, the folio being given to M. de La Huproye, Councillor to the Royal Court of Appeal of Paris.

About a year later, on the evening of the 3rd of June, 1831, this magistrate was dining with his family in his fine *appartement* in the rue Neuve-St.-François at Marais, and was discussing with his son-in-law, M. Charles Theurier de Pommyer, assistant judge to the Tribunal de la Seine, his connection with the Condé *affaire*.

"I have just put the finishing touch, *mon cher*, and must admit, without, however, violating the secrecy of the *instruction*, that I am extremely worried. In the whole of my career I have seldom found it so difficult to formulate my conclusions—— But what does Firmin want?"

Solemnly the *maître d'hôtel* leaned over the right side of the old magistrate and murmured in his ear:

"M. the Procureur-Général asks to see immediately M. le Conseiller."

"Oh, very well then," said M. de la Huproye, throwing down his serviette. "I am coming."

Mme. de Pommyer ran to the window.

"Why, it is the carriage of M. Persil; for the last two days he seems to have been here constantly."

"It can only be on the question of your husband's advancement," replied the councillor's wife, turning toward her son-in-law, who made a somewhat self-conscious gesture of denial, "but it seems to me that the discussion is rather heated."

Indeed, from the neighbouring cabinet, agitated voices

pierced the walls. Worthy daughter of Eve, Mme. de Pommyer put her ear to the keyhole. The young woman pressed herself against the door, regardless of her coiffure, artistically dressed *à la girafe*, as also of the carmelite bustle.

"Your report will not see the light of day," affirmed M. Persil. "Reasons of State!"

"What! M. le Procureur-Général, do you speak of reasons of State to a State magistrate? Politics over-riding justice!"

The Procureur-Général cut him short:

"It is just a question of the guilt or innocence of la Feuchères. You see, it is the honour of the Royal Family which is at stake."

"At stake?"

"Why, yes! They are conjointly answerable for—for the—in short, for that which your report concludes. Destroy it. I am authorized to advise you to apply for your inclusion on the superannuation——"

"Before the delivery of my report?"

"Before the delivery of your report. One more word: it is possible that to-morrow your son-in-law may be titular judge to the tribunal of the Seine."

That evening M. de la Huproye wrote in his diary:

"Providence knows better than we that which is for our good, and always arranges things for the best. Let us abandon ourselves to its direction. It is M. le President Brière-Valigny who will replace me in performing the duties of *juge d'instruction* in the Condé *affaire*!"

For over a year now there had been a "Condé *affaire*". At first a theory of suicide was mooted. The Prince's household, at least the greater part, so carefully selected by the baronne, had abounded with the version suggested from the very beginning by the beautiful Sophie. Only Manoury, the abbé Pélier de la Croix, the duc's chaplain and curé of St. Leu, and a very few others rejected this insinuation with horror. Beside, the Church in granting the usual funeral honours, showed that it did not admit the version of suicide.

The first summary *instruction* was opened by the *envoyés* of Louis-Philippe, namely, M. de Rumigny, chief of the king's private police and the Baron Pasquier, president of the

Chambre des Pairs. The latter, in a confidential note to the King, wrote :

“The circumstances of the death are too extraordinary not to indicate a very thorough *instruction*.”

For his part M. de Rumigny wrote :

“Sire, suspicion does not, so far, point to any one person, but God alone knows what we will eventually discover, for the death has not the appearance of being ‘suicide’.”

The abbé Pélier did not remain inactive. He showed how, from the outside of the duc’s bedroom door, one could open and shut the bolt on the inside with the assistance of a silk lace. But, in the face of orders from above, the son of Cæsar being above suspicion, a verdict of *non-lieu** was decided according to a report based on certain medical statements in which the profession admitted the *possibility of suicide*, if one ignored certain ecchymoses raised on the corpse, also the *swollen state of his lungs*, as though after suffocation.

Nevertheless public opinion commenced to air its views, and did not hesitate to accuse Mme. de Feuchères of the crime as soon as the findings of the magistrates of Pontoise who had made the first statements, and those of the members of the parquet of Paris who had organized the inquest, leaked out. Words more murderous than bullets began to circulate.

“Madame de Feuchères,” wrote Nestor Roqueplan, the well-known journalist, “is a little English baronne who very much resembles a sash-fastening.”

A saying of the Prince Louis de Rohan was hawked round. He, in speaking of the unconcealed uneasiness of the Orléans family, said : “With them fear takes the place of remorse.”

In the face of such emotion, doubled because the Rohans as first cousins of the Prince disputed the will, the baronne, who had fled precipitately from St. Leu, full of terror and nightmares, pulled herself together. She asked for and obtained a further *instruction*, the very one which was confided to M. de la Huproye.

* *Non-lieu*=insufficient grounds for continuing the charge. Evidently Mme. de Feuchères was suspected, even by those in charge of the enquiry.

This magistrate heard no less than 122 witnesses, and this is what he learned :

The Prince's room gave, by double doors, on to an antechamber with three doors, one that of entry, locked each night by the *valet de service* ; the other, that of his room, which contrary to custom was found bolted ; the third, a glass-panel leading to a disused staircase ; moreover, the bolt of this last exit was not pushed in its staple when Lecomte and M. Bonnie entered the antechamber. Granted that it was so easy to manœuvre the bolt of the Prince's room from the outside by a silk lace, grave conclusions were immediately suggested.

They were not lessened by the fact that through a hunting accident the Prince was incapacitated from lifting his left arm, that the bed was disturbed as though the Prince had slept in the middle, though he invariably kept to the extreme edge ; that this piece of furniture instead of touching the back of the alcove, was about half a yard away from it. The slippers, unused, were at the foot of the bed, instead of being in front of the chimney—their accustomed place.

Certain phrases which the domestic staff let fall were significant. The wife Dupré, the baronne's *femme de chambre*, who slept above the ducal room, declared :

"Madame is very lucky that I have not wished to speak."

The day of the funeral, Lecomte, the Prince's *valet de chambre*, burst out :

"Ah, my heart is heavy," but he did not try to explain further.

Contrary to the affirmations of the handsome *sous-officier* of the gendarmerie, who was consoling the baronne in her anticipated widowhood, the Prince's friends affirmed that they had never seen the duc in a more happy frame of mind, and they protested his horror of suicide both as a gentleman and a Christian.

As we have seen, the nomination of M. de la Huproye had been given effect, but in a way different from the secret desires of the Tuileries, from whence originated the action of M. Persil and the passing on of the *instruction* to M. Brière-Valigny.

The *chambre d'accusation*, called the 16th of June, 1831, thirteen days after the compulsory resignation of M. de la

Huproye, declared, in spite of energetic protests by Councillor de Monmerque, by the mouth of the first President Segulier, member of the council of the family of the duc d'Aumale, that it was not established that the death of the Prince de Condé was the result of a crime. It thus implicitly adopted the theory of suicide.

The *procès civils*, entered by the Rohans, for the annulment of the will, met with no success, so that Mme. de Feuchères was able to enjoy her fortune in peace, if not with honour. She was banned from society. The Orléanists themselves did not wish to receive her. And when she was surprised at not being invited to the balls of the *Chambre* in the Palais-Bourbon of which she had once been the queen, President Dupin told her that :

“Only the King has the right to give grace. I—I have it not.”

Eventually Sophie, hated alike by Royalists and Republicans, returned to London, where she died in December 1840.

It was only later that light fell upon that tragic night. On his deathbed, thirty years later, the valet Lecomte revealed that, awakened by the Dupré couple, who had heard some suspicious noises, he had opened the door of the antechamber and had seen the *sous-officier* of the gendarmerie and the baronne leave the Prince's room and disappear up the disused staircase. Mme. de Feuchères ordered him to remain silent, and he, terrorized, retired. His wife declared that she had picked up near the bed a serviette, strangely rumpled and soiled with mucus and tobacco as if it had been violently applied to the face of the last of the Condés. Finally General Lambot declared himself in agreement with Lecomte on the essential points.

The crime is patent. But was Louis-Philippe an accomplice? It would seem difficult to deny that he was the instigator. A certain letter : “At any price the Prince must be prevented from leaving France” gives credence to it. One might also ask whether the legacy of Chantilly by the duc d'Aumale to the Institute was not, in the conscience of this excellent soldier, an implicit recognition of the tainted source of his inheritance.

MURDER, ACCIDENT OR SUICIDE ?

Mystery and Passion.

XIII.—MURDER, ACCIDENT OR SUICIDE ?

GABRIEL SYVETON

ON Friday, the 4th of November, 1904, General André was vigorously haranguing the Chamber of Deputies. The Government was being attacked on the question of political espionage among French Army officers, and General André, French Minister of War since 1900, was speaking in his defence. The Chamber did not receive his words kindly, for General André was not popular at that time ; among other things he had been the only General to believe in the innocence of Dreyfus, and had not hesitated to impress the fact upon the world.

In consequence, when he concluded his speech by saying that he was not going to be hounded out of office to please the Opposition, that he was Minister of War and intended to remain Minister of War in spite of anti-Republican attempts to oust him out, there was an immediate uproar raised by his political opponents, in the midst of which M. Syveton, a Nationalist Deputy for Paris, rushed across the open space in front of the tribune to the spot where the Minister of War was standing, and with an inarticulate scream of rage struck General André several violent blows in the face. Then he rushed away, hiding himself on the upper tiers of the seats of the right, while members of the left shouted "Coward ! Coward !"

The General fell back in his seat, his face covered with blood, and in a moment the French Chamber was a scene of uproar and excitement unprecedented in its history.

The Radical and Socialist members supporting the Government rushed across toward the Conservative benches, and a free fight was about to ensue when the President suspended the sitting.

General André was assisted out of the Chamber, and while

his face was bathed with a sponge, intense excitement prevailed in the lobbies.

At ten minutes past ten the sitting was resumed. M. Syveton was still in the Chamber, surrounded by his political friends, who patted him on the back and said : "You did well. You did quite right. Don't go."

The President of the Chamber at once brought in a motion for the immediate expulsion of M. Syveton for his unwarrantable conduct, speaking thus :

" . . . Under application of the Article 129 of the rules which deals with offences committed in the precincts of the Palais legislate, I propose to the Chamber that M. Syveton be censured and temporarily excluded."

M. Jules Jaluzot : "Pardon, M. le President, I ask permission to speak." (Lively protests from the left and extreme left.)

M. le President : "Does this permission mean that you want to defend M. Syveton ; otherwise I cannot accord it."

M. Jules Jaluzot : "Monsieur le President——" ("No ! No !" from the left and extreme left.) "Allow me, Messieurs." (Prolonged disorder.)

M. le President : "I will consult the Chamber by standing and sitting on the censure with temporary exclusion."

The motion for his temporary expulsion was voted by a large majority, though the Conservatives voted against it. M. Syveton refused to depart, however, whereupon the President suspended the sitting until the Deputy was removed by the military guard, and at 10.35 the séance was closed.

Under Art. 228 of the French Penal Code, any individual who, though he be unarmed, and no wounds ensue, shall have struck a minister in the exercise of his functions, or on the occasion of exercising such functions, shall be punished by two to five years' imprisonment.

On the 7th of November, therefore, Monsieur Bulot, Procureur-Général, writing from the Parquet, applied to the President of the Chamber of Deputies for the authorization necessary to institute proceedings against M. Syveton for offences under the Penal Code, Article 228, as mentioned above.

This was duly granted, and the trial was fixed for Wednesday, the 9th of December, while in the meantime the length

of M. Syveton's expulsion was fixed for the period of thirty days.

Meanwhile, not only was the Chamber stirred by the exciting scene between M. Syveton and General André, but so was all Paris, and as members of the Chamber were divided into two camps, for and against Syveton, so was the general public, and feeling ran high. Needless to say, when the news of fresh scandal leaked out—namely, that for the sake of an extra stripe or a ribbon, certain Army officers were known to have betrayed the private life of their comrades—it did not in any way serve to lessen the excitement, though it did serve to martyrize Syveton, who became known as a courageous Deputy who carried his anxiety for the national welfare to the point of braving the justice of the Government. It must be remembered that M. Syveton, formerly a brilliant university professor who began to busy himself with politics about the time of the Dreyfus second trial, had previously been featured in the public eye some years before when, owing to some strong anti-Dreyfus speeches of his, he was suspended. He therefore resigned, his salary being made up by members of the Nationalist Party, and he was quickly appointed treasurer of the *Ligue de la Patrie Française*, which he helped to form. He was later elected member for the Second Ward of Paris, defeating a prominent Government candidate, M. Mesureur, but was unseated, then re-elected by an increased majority of forty.

So, therefore, entering the salon of Mme. de Loynes, the Egeria of the *Ligue de la Patrie Française*, M. Syveton was welcomed by an ovation, and this professor of history became a hero, hailed as such by Lamaître, Copée, Dausset and Vaugeois.

Another who shone in the reflected glory of the Deputy's sudden eminence was his wife, a pretty Belgian widow, who became in consequence more surrounded than an empress. Her salon was crowded, while even Syveton's stepdaughter, the child of his wife's first marriage, did not fail to come in for her share of glory, even though her marriage with a vague business agent had more or less relegated her to social obscurity, despite her beauty, for she was described as "elegant and dainty as a white iris".

With each passing day Syveton's strength became more apparent—a fact worth recollecting in the light of subsequent

happenings. So much so, in fact, that the Government was forced to relax its severity, and when M. Dupin de Laforcade, Commissioner of Police, seized the person of the Deputy on the 10th of November, just as Syveton was about to fight a duel at the stud of Suresnes with Captain de Gail, orderly officer of General André, M. Berteaux, Deputy of the Seine-et-Oise, intervened and secured his immediate liberty.

Elsewhere throughout France other duels were taking place, both of words and swords. Everyone was for or against Syveton. Of the more sanguinary encounters the most famous was that of Jaurès, who obtained from the Government a safe-conduct of twenty-four hours for Déroulède, exiled poet and politician, so that the two could exchange shots.

So passed the days: the nearer approached the day of the trial the more raged the excitement, until at last the 8th of December came round, the eve of what was to be the climax of the political sensation. On that day a bombshell burst, to be received incredulously by a stunned and bewildered France—Syveton was found dead!

For the history of that day and the next no words are more descriptive of what happened than those of the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Express*, as published the following day in that readable paper.

Thursday, 8th December.

“A great sensation was caused in Paris to-day by the discovery of M. Syveton, the turbulent but brilliant Nationalist Deputy, lying at the point of death in his study.

“M. Syveton was to have stood his trial to-morrow for the assault he made on General André in the French Chamber which brought about the War Minister’s enforced resignation.

“He had been engaged all the morning with political friends and with his counsel, and had lunched with his wife. He seemed to be in excellent spirits.

“After lunch he retired to his study, where he received the secretary of the Marquis de Dion, and then, stating that he felt tired with the excitement of the morning’s work, decided to lie down for a few minutes’ sleep on the carpet in front of the gas-stove which stood in the firegrate.

“This was at half-past one. At three o’clock, his wife, surprised at not seeing him, went into the study to ask him if he intended going to the Chamber of Deputies

that afternoon, his period of thirty days' expulsion having just expired.

"She found him stretched apparently lifeless on the carpet, and, noticing a strong smell of gas, opened a window and shouted for a servant. A medical man arrived in a few minutes, but, after kneeling over M. Syveton, declared that he was beyond aid. The Deputy was carried to his bed, where he died, without recovering consciousness, at four o'clock.

"Rumours immediately spread that M. Syveton had committed suicide, but his friends state that they do not believe this, as there was no cause for such a rash act. Paris juries almost invariably acquit in political cases, and owing to the feeling being now very much against General André on account of the system of espionage which he employed in the Army, it was believed that M. Syveton would come out well from the trial.

"The tap of the gas-stove was found on examination to have been turned almost full on. This might have been harmless in itself had its chimney flue not been closed.

"The Commissioner of Police discovered, however, that the opening was completely closed, a copy of a newspaper having been used for the purpose. The paper was found to be a copy of the *Intransigeant*, dated 9th December; this journal always antedated a day. It was clear, therefore, that the opening of the chimney was closed to-day."

Of this last extraordinary fact there is more to be said later on. In the meanwhile, after having given a brief resumé of Syveton's political career, the *Daily Express* said :

"The *Soir* learns that a fortnight ago M. Syveton took out a policy with the agency of a large American assurance company in Paris."

The excitement rose to fever pitch on the next day ; there was scarcely a newspaper which did not comment upon the extraordinary death of the Deputy. This is what was reported to the *Express* :

Friday, 9th December.

"The remarkable and tragic death of the Deputy, M. Syveton, is the one subject of conversation in Paris.

"The more violent of the Nationalist papers speak openly of murder. The *Tibre Parole* this morning came out with a headline, extending across two columns of the front page, worded: 'Masonic Crime: Assassination of M. Syveton.' M. Henri Rochefort heads a sensational article in his paper *Intransigeant*, with the word 'L'Assassin', and states that all the probabilities of the case point to the murder of M. Syveton. Even the *Echo de Paris* goes so far as to hint at foul play.

"M. François Coppée, the poet, who was one of the first to arrive last night at the bedside of the dead man, fell on his knees and said, 'They have killed thee, generous friend. But we shall avenge thee.' M. Léon Daudet, who came soon after M. Coppée, cried out: 'This is black murder!' M. Jules Lemaître averred, 'This is a Masonic crime. Syveton was about to make most damning revelations at his trial concerning the part played by Freemasons in the general spying business.'

"All these statements are, it is needless to say, groundless. Extraordinary as the coincidence of M. Syveton's death on the eve of his trial may appear, the particulars elicited to-day point to an accidental death, and the post-mortem examination shows conclusively that it was due to asphyxiation by carbonic gases."

Naturally the slightly hysterical utterances of Syveton's excited friends cannot be accepted too seriously, and due allowance must be made for political prejudice. Yet there is never smoke without fire, and it is certainly curious that there should have been such a general outburst of suspicion that Syveton did not commit suicide.

It is all very well to say that the post-mortem examination proved conclusively that death was due to asphyxiation by carbonic gases. It never was suggested that the Deputy met his death in any other way. The point was: Did Syveton inhale the gas voluntarily?

Granted that it was murder—who committed the crime? It is easy to guess whom the Parisians suspected: one and all shriek aloud their theories. The crime was Governmental.

That, however, in the light of sane common sense, was a preposterous supposition. In the first case, what could have

been the motive? It was commonly acknowledged that in all probability Syveton would have been acquitted—that must be admitted—but even so, what harm could Syveton have done after his acquittal which he could not have perpetrated before? He had thirty days to do his worst, and that he had not done so is surely proof enough that M. Lemaître was exaggerating somewhat.

If there are any further facts necessary to banish for always the idea of Government implication, it is that justice was quickly put into action. Mme. Syveton found her husband dying about three o'clock in the afternoon. At six-thirty M. Boucard, *juge d'instruction*, was on the spot, accompanied by Doctor Socquet. Obviously there was no negligence betrayed, yet granted that the murder was political, it could not have been difficult for the authorities to have delayed matters so as to have made subsequent investigations obscure.

The evening of the death and the following day suspicious rumours, said to have been commenced by counsel for M. Syveton, began to circulate in and out of the editorial offices. Maître Noilhan, one of the most prominent members of the *Patrie Française*, by means of these rumours, firstly attempted to create the impression that the death was due to an accident, but later, in face of the undiluted scepticism with which this explanation was received, he began to speak of suicide and eventually succeeded in advancing by twenty-four hours the time arranged for the obsequies; these were celebrated on the tenth, and the discourse of M. Jules Lemaître was reduced to a brief adieu.

That same day a bizarre deposition made at the Palais de Justice served to whet the public appetite for further particulars of what promised to be a scandal of the first water. That day the Deputy's past history began to leak out, year by year.

Mme. Syveton's first marriage had produced a daughter. At the time of Syveton's death that daughter, Margot, as she was familiarly known, was twenty-one years of age, and had grown into an extremely pretty girl. She had been married for the past few months to a certain Monsieur Menard, who, in conjunction with his partner, M. Adolphe Potel, directed a business agency in the Boulevard Magenta.

Potel, it is strange to note, on the very day of Syveton's death had telephoned his friend, M. Ganet, his conviction that

the Syveton-André affair would never see the morrow. On the 10th, just about the time that the coffin containing the remains of the Deputy was being lowered into the family vault in the Montparnesse cemetery, Potel called upon M. Boucard to give some very intimate details concerning a disagreement between Syveton and his stepdaughter's husband, Menard, and it was, perhaps, this deposition which, more than anything else, subsequently helped to guide the verdict of the *instruction* toward that of suicide.

According to Potel—and we must conclude that his information came direct from Menard—this very extraordinary affair began as follows: On the morning of the 6th of December, that is to say, four days before the trial of Syveton was due to begin, Mme. Syveton received the following letter from Menard:

“MADAM,

“I am obliged in the presence of your daughter to inform you of something very serious. You will find me at my house, whether at noon or in the evening, after my business hours.”

On the advice of her husband, Mme. Syveton therefore went, about noon, to her daughter, who lived in the rue Louis-Philippe, a short walk from her mother, who resided at 20bis, Avenue de Neuilly.

There she received news of a revolting nature, which must have doubly outraged her finer feelings, both in regard to her conjugal love and also her maternal confidence, for, according to Menard, Syveton's relations with his stepdaughter Margot had been more intimate than proper.

As if this were not sufficient trouble, in all conscience, this gentle creature Margot then sent for her maid, Anna Spillmacher. Anna, sister of Mme. Syveton's cook, also had a curious tale to tell, for if she were to be believed, Syveton had not only misconducted himself with Margot, but with herself as well. Quite unblushingly she related to “Madame” that Monsieur had even gone so far as to take her, as he had “Mademoiselle”, into houses of a very doubtful nature!

It was a pity that Mme. Syveton did not reflect to herself that this was the *second* time her daughter had brought a similar accusation against her husband, for eight years ago

Margot had confessed to her mother that she was her stepfather's mistress. Fortunately for Syveton's peace of mind, a medical examination had soon proved both the absurdity of the statement and the virginity of the girl. Nor did Mme. Syveton ask herself why Anna, formerly in her own employ, had not revealed her *affaire* when, six months ago, Syveton had dismissed her summarily. Instead, Mme Syveton said :

"But, unhappy woman, why speak to-day?"

"'Mademoiselle' was troubled last night. All this worried her, and I advised her to tell her husband all," replied Anna.

It was curious that this double confession should have coincided with the eve of a political lawsuit; but this point of view did not occur to Mme. Syveton, who immediately rushed home and without delay tackled her husband.

Syveton denied all, and agreed to go with Mme. Syveton to the Menards, though unwillingly, for there were so many things he had on hand in connection with his trial.

As soon as he was face to face with Mme. Menard he addressed her strongly :

"Liar, you are trying to get rid of me because I know of your letter to Jondeau" (or Jeantrou).

With the tables thus turned Margot resorted to a trick not unknown to her sex, and swooned away. Menard, like a true husband, immediately defended his wife, dubbed Syveton a liar and coward, and threw into his face a fifty-franc note which Syveton was supposed to have given to Margot the preceding 25th of November—the feast of Sainte-Catherine the virgin!

Whereupon Syveton insisted that the next thing to be done was to tackle Pierre Jondeau, who was a concierge at 20bis, Avenue de Neuilly, and employed his spare time by scrubbing floors, selling wines, and sometimes acting as an extra hand at bourgeois dinners.

To the rue Louis-Phillippe Jondeau was fetched, where he was confronted by Syveton and accused of receiving amorous letters from Margot. He promptly denied ever receiving anything from "Mademoiselle" before her marriage. Jondeau was then dismissed, and it needs little imagination to picture the scene which followed.

At length, after much upbraiding, which Syveton had to bear, his wife and he departed for home. Arriving at the

Avenue Neuilly they again interrogated Jondeau, but as before, without any success, and at length the Deputy gave the matter up and they departed upstairs.

Presently Jondeau saw Mme. Syveton coming down again, a small travelling-bag in her hand. Jumping to the conclusion she was leaving her husband, the concierge felt a spasm of remorse, and stopping her, said :

“Well, Madame, perhaps ‘Mademoiselle’ did write me a few letters. Oh, but just full of childish nonsense.”

Childish nonsense ! Jondeau was no doubt a pure-minded man. He saw no harm in a young girl of nineteen years of age, born of a distinguished family, writing thus to a floor-scrubbing concierge :

“You know, mon Pierre, now we must be sensible. I must say *au revoir* and *à bientôt*. What happiness ! I give thee a long and tender kiss. We will not forget thee and the other one speaks often of thee.”

Childish nonsense ! If it be just childish to write such tender passages to a friend, to address them in the familiar second person, then indeed it was time for Margot to grow up ! Nevertheless, her mother must have forgiven her, for subsequently she said, “All young girls have their romance !”

En passant, the *other one* was Anna, the servant ! He was a gay dog, this concierge, a regular Don Juan, who kept an apartment on the fifth floor in the rue d’Armaille, rented specially as a love nest, which proves that Margot knew of Jondeau’s relationship with Anna !

However, Mme Syveton seemed satisfied, so she returned to her apartment, taking the concierge with her. He repeated his tale to the Deputy and, having heard the story which cleared him, the Deputy thanked the man profusely.

The much advertised method of meeting troubles by going to sleep upon them evidently was not one to be recommended to Mme. Syveton. Despite the proof which had been given her that her daughter’s character was far from being all it should be, she continued to remain sceptical as to her husband’s innocence. The next morning, therefore, she called in the family doctor, Doctor Tholmer.

No sooner had he arrived when before him and at full

speed she made a charge against her unfortunate spouse. Syveton despairingly shrugged his shoulders and muttered, "All these women are mad," possibly the first sensible words which had been spoken since the affair commenced.

Needless to relate, Mme. Syveton developed a fresh outburst of hysteria, so to help calm her the doctor advised Syveton to go again and consult with his daughter, to which suggestion the Deputy agreed, after which he made his exit, and arranged an appointment with his stepdaughter for four o'clock that afternoon.

To his wife this must have seemed an excellent opportunity to trap her husband into some sort of confession, so that, all unbeknown to the Deputy, when Syveton and Margot met in the salon, Mme. Syveton was behind a screen.

The unfortunate man did not hesitate to speak out to his accuser. "I have brought you up, married you off, given you a *dot*. Now in gratitude you are trying to destroy my *ménage*!"

Margot endeavoured to interrupt, but he would not allow her to speak, and continued: "Enough! You are jealous of your mother, who lives in luxury, while you, through the fault of your poor specimen of a husband, have only a mediocre establishment. *Miserable! Coquine!*"

At this point Mme. Syveton revealed herself. Having spoken in anything but a polite manner to her husband, she said: "I went with Anna to a house in the Place Pereire. I showed them this portrait; they recognized you."

It is a little difficult to discover exactly what happened at that moment. According to the evidence of the inquiry, Mme. Syveton reported that he sank down in despair. On the other hand, Mme. Menard and Anna—though from where Anna appeared it is a little difficult to discover, unless she were behind a convenient keyhole—are agreed that he was very arrogant. At any rate, whatever his attitude, it is certain that the three women endeavoured to persuade the *judge* that Syveton admitted the impeachment.

Afterward M. and Mme. Syveton returned in a *fiacre* to the Avenue de Neuilly, which was not more than a five minutes' walk or a three minutes' ride from their daughter's apartment. Yet Mme. Syveton would have the world believe that in those three minutes her husband made a *detailed* confession of his meetings with the seductive Margot!

Surely proof enough in itself that those meetings, if any, were entirely innocuous !

However, they arrived home together, he to enter his office, where he knocked his forehead against a piece of furniture. His wife, evidently crushing remorselessly all the sorrow which she must have felt at Syveton's confession, forgave him his errors and dressed the wound !

On the stroke of seven, Doctor Tholmer and M. Menard arrived on the scene, the latter brandishing a revolver, and swearing vengeance on his father-in-law. However, he heard the noise of the approaching Deputy, and repenting the error of his ways, disappeared.

After the doctor, too, had departed, they had dinner, which was anything but a cheerful meal. Then arrived Maître Noilhan, Syveton's counsel. Apparently very few words passed between the two men, who parted with a long hand-clasp. There is no doubt counsel suspected the cause of the Deputy's distrait air.

As to what happened from that time until the next morning, there is only Mme. Syveton's evidence to accept, but, according to her, when they went to bed, her husband sat at the foot of the bed, and bursting into a flood of tears, admitted that he was a miserable sinner, that in addition to all his amorous practices, he had robbed from the funds of the *Patrie Française* an amount of 90,000 francs. Taking everything into consideration, there was nothing else for him to do but flee !

This, of course, would have been a very sensible suggestion! Instead of earning sufficient money to allow his wife to spend 40,000 francs a year, having forsaken his political career, one must assume that he would have lived quietly on the meagre pittance of an historian, and the pension of a *conseiller politique* which the Comte Boni de Castellane would have allowed him !

It is difficult, therefore, to give the slightest credence to Mme. Syveton's story, specially so as in the limelight of subsequent inquiries it was proved that Syveton had not appropriated any money from the Ligue, but had lodged that amount some time before in a Belgian bank as a reserve fund, which fact was well known to other members of the Ligue, and the fact that the 90,000 francs was intact is surely sufficient proof of Syveton's honesty.

Reaching this point naturally brings the period to that of

the morning of Syveton's death. His movements during the last few hours of his life have already been related, though, *en passant*, it is worth recording a slight difference of reports as to whether Syveton did indeed lunch with his wife ; for while some maintain he did, others state that his wife, out during the morning, had returned about 12.40, when she went to her husband to ask him to accompany her to the dining-room. He is said to have refused, demanding that he should not be disturbed, under any pretext whatsoever, as he had to put the finishing touches to his declaration to the jury. Of course, it is really not an important factor in the mystery, for many suicides (granting suicide as the cause of death) are most cheerful the few hours preceding death, while others, by every word and action, plainly betray their intentions to those who can read the signs. Therefore, whether he enjoyed a hearty lunch with his wife, or whether he shut himself up in his office, signifies very little, and as such can quite easily be forgotten.

What cannot be disregarded is the inexplicable conduct of the Deputy's relations after his burial. Whether they believed him guilty or not of the extraordinary charges laid at his door, it is surprising that they should have voluntarily exposed the private life of a man just dead, thereby blackening it to the best of their ability. The mere thought of it suggests that whatever Syveton's sins of commission or omission, they must have compared favourably with those of the rest of the family who so soon betrayed the dead man, when it would have been as easy to have shielded him.

During the course of investigations many witnesses were called, many experts interviewed, with the result that the affair began to be wrapped in a shroud of mystery.

In the first case Potel affirmed that when Mme. Syveton heard of her husband's apparent offence against his step-daughter, she informed the Deputy that she intended to apply for a divorce. When he appealed to her to alter her decision she replied that it was irrevocable, whereupon he is supposed to have sworn to commit suicide rather than face the attendant revelations concerning his own immorality.

Dr. Barnay, husband of Syveton's sister, said that Mme. Syveton was a spendthrift, that she had luxurious tastes, and was even likely to ruin him. Also, he said, although she had

very great influence over him, she was quite likely to have left him if he ever became ruined.

Experts, consulted as to the possibility of the Deputy having committed suicide, reported that to have committed suicide in the room in which he was found it would have been necessary for him to have placed his head upon his hands and have maintained it right over the gas, which would have necessitated an almost impossible degree of courage and will-power to have resisted the final spasm of innate desire to retain life, it having taken from ten to fifteen minutes for death to overtake him.

On the other hand, while they recognized that the above theory was inadmissible, they granted that it might have been possible for him to have gone into the neighbouring room, and there have lit the coal-stove, from which a quantity of oxide of carbon escaped. This, entering his body, would have accounted for the excessive amount found in his remains, thus confirming the findings of M. Ogier, chief of the laboratory of toxicology, who reported that the body contained four to five times more toxic gas than was necessary to produce death, and that the Deputy must have inhaled this gas for some time before falling down.

These experts now elaborated this theory by suggesting that, having been found dying, Syveton was carried from the bathroom to his office and there laid down on the floor. The implication being that he had actually attempted to commit suicide in the bathroom; they suggested that, being found by relatives, he was carried to the office, and laid down on the floor with his face over the gas-stove, this being done to create the impression that he had slipped and fallen, knocked his head against something hard which had rendered him unconscious, and in this way he had breathed in the gas responsible for his death—all this being done to create the impression of an accident, that his name might not be besmirched by the taint of suicide.

By the time these different reports reached the public, Paris had been split into two opposing parties—the Republicans striving to uphold Syveton's honour by denouncing M. Menard and others of the family, while the Nationalists naturally took up the stand that the Deputy had committed suicide, and that nobody was to blame.

The newspapers devoted columns daily to the latest information, and did not forget to add their own views, which, of course, varied according to whichever political party dictated their policy, while some of them published interviews with the principal witnesses, one of which, with Mme. Syveton, appeared on December 6th, in the *Petit Temps*.

In it, and in contrast to the evidence of her son-in-law, and her own testimony to the *juge d'instruction*, she denied wishing to calumniate her husband, and stated emphatically that she had never entertained for a moment the idea of divorcing him. She also admitted that Syveton had absolutely denied all culpability of the charges brought against him by Margot—certainly a different story to that which she had previously told. Moreover, she pointed out that Syveton's family were all subject to heart attacks.

On the same day as this interview appeared, Mme. Syveton was summoned to appear before the *juge d'instruction*, and in the course of examination confessed that she found her husband with his face on the fire-clay, that she had washed his face and then stuffed up the chimney a copy of the *Intransigeant* to make the death appear an accident, and that she and the concierge had burned all his papers.

On the 20th of December, M. Sinart, Commissaire of Police, who had been charged with investigations, announced that his theory of suicide coincided with that of the widow, that under the peculiar circumstances it had taken one hour and a half to die, thirty minutes of which was of voluntary inhalation, after which he had fallen in a coma on to the fire-clay, where his lungs continued to draw in the death-dealing gas.

However, while some of the family seemed bent upon blackening the name of the unfortunate man, there were, happily, others who took up the cudgels in his defence, notably the father, and the brother-in-law, M. Barnay, who lived at 178bis, rue de Vaugirard. These two men combined together in a *partie civile*, and brought an action against X charged with the murder of Gabriel Syveton. This was taken out on the 21st of December.

This action, of course, quite foreign to legal methods as practised in this country, needs some explanation. Briefly it means that an individual, or a group of individuals, can charge a second party with having committed a crime or an

offence, whereupon the authorities, on behalf of the *partie civile*, proceed to investigate the accusation through official channels. In the event of the authorities failing to find sufficient basis for the charge, the *partie civile* then become liable for damages and costs.

In this case the *partie civile*, as before related, charged X with being a murderer, X, of course, as in algebra, representing the unknown quantity. In other words, murder having been imputed, the *juge d'instruction* had to direct his enquiries to prove that Syveton had been murdered by X, and he could, consequently, summon and question witnesses with just the same authority as though X were a known person.

This plaint caused no surprise, for it had been rumoured for some time that such would be the case, though in some quarters it had been murmured that Mme. Syveton would have been the one named by the *partie civile*.

From this time forward the investigation was continued still more vigorously. Among many other items of interest elicited by the *juge* and by the members of the Préfecture was the fact that on 1st October, 1900, Syveton took out with the Mutual Life a life insurance policy in favour of his wife for the sum of 150,000 francs, the terms of which called for the company, after the third premium had been paid, to pay out the full sum irrespective of the cause of death.

It was also discovered that two other companies insured him for 50,000 francs each ; consequently Syveton's death netted for his wife the sum of 250,000 francs.

This was surely an argument more in favour of the murder theory than otherwise, although it was treated generally as a point for the Nationalists' arguments. To believe the latter, however, would be to believe that he had been preparing for his suicide for the previous four years—long before the scandal in the House of Deputies, in fact, even before the time he was supposed to have violated the chastity of his own step-daughter !

Another point to the Republicans was that Mme Syveton's allegations regarding her husband's visits to houses of ill-fame was unfounded, for it was proved that he had never been with any woman to the house in the Place Periere, or any other similar place.

About this time there was published in the *Humanité* a

most amazing series of articles by M. Jaurès (afterwards himself assassinated in 1914), in which the politician openly declared and proved that suicide was impossible, and that the Deputy had been murdered by members of his family. Imagine the consequences to, say, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, if he had published a similar series of articles in the *Daily Herald*, suggesting that the family of Smith-Brown was responsible for the death of Smith-Brown, M.P. !

However, despite M. Jaurès's fiery articles, despite the many contradictions and the more than unsatisfactory evidence of Mme. Syveton, despite the ridiculous and disproved statements of Mme. Menard and the girl Anna Spillmacher, on the 23rd of January the following statement was issued by the *juge d'instruction* :

“We, Henri Boucard, *juge d'instruction* at the *tribunal de première instance* of the Seine :

“In view of the action brought against X . . . charged with the murder of M. Gabriel Syveton :

“We declare that there is insufficient cause to continue it. We instruct that the *partie civile* shall defray costs of the *instruction*.

“Given in our office at the Palais de Justice, Paris, 23rd January, 1905.

“(Signed) BOUCARD.”

This short document signified two things : firstly, that the *partie civile* would have to pay out 5,560 francs, of which the cost of shadowing and surveillance amounted to about 1,600 francs ; secondly, that no one was guilty of Syveton's death.

It was dictated following the delivery of the *requisitoire* (public prosecutor's address to the Court) of M. Fabre, *Procureur de la République*, which *requisitoire* seems more diplomatic than judicial.

In it, briefly, M. Fabre was sceptical in regard to the supposed immorality of Syveton, upon which he made reserves. He was surprised at the eagerness of Menard to reveal acts at which his own honour and that of his wife had nothing to rejoice. He was still more surprised—still referring to Menard—at the tardy knowledge of a conjugal unhappiness displayed by this victim of profane love, who had,

apparently, "an extremely pronounced naïvete". It seemed to him that these young women, Marguerite and Anna, had taken pleasure in denouncing the indignity of Syveton.

On the other hand, he admitted the good faith of Mme. Syveton. According to him, from the moment that she despised him, the said husband had only to disappear. She did not kill her husband. Therefore the husband killed himself!

There is no proof—continued M. Fabre—that Syveton was put to sleep before being asphyxiated. There is no proof that he had been maintained on the gas-fire blocks.

If Mme. Syveton spoke against the honour of her husband, it was constrained and forced. If she had accused him of having converted to his own use the funds of the Patrie Française, it was in order to restore them, to demonstrate that if she were disinterested, her husband in her eyes had fallen into a state of profound downfall.

But, then, why did Syveton kill himself? It was because, having need of confidence in himself on the eve of the assizes, he felt that he was losing that confidence when his wife, whom he had loved above everything, threatened to unmask his deeds.

Such was the logic which led the law to drop the charge of murder against X, yet what kind of logic was it? Firstly, M. Fabre begins this report by affirming that he gives no credence to the reports of Syveton's so-called loose manner of living, yet he finishes by concluding that Syveton committed suicide through fear of divulgence of his *affaires*.

How absurd is that logic! Either Syveton had led an immoral life—which M. Fabre denies—and feared exposure, or else he was innocent, in which case he would have no need to fear his wife's threats—which M. Fabre also denies!

There the matter dropped; legal opinion declared that it was not murder; as to whether it was accident or suicide remained unanswered, and from that day to this the matter has remained vague and unsatisfactory.

Yet, looking backward through the years, it appears that in the heat of the moment, in the maze of false testimony, contradictions, absurd charges and political enmity, there are many points which might well have been investigated.

First of all it is safe to assume that the Préfecture, during

the years of Syveton's political life, had not been blind. The Deputy was one of the most prominent opponents of the Government since 1898, the year in which the *Patrie Française* was founded, and it is quite safe to assume that Syveton was closely watched. Even supposing that during those six years the amorous relations with his stepdaughter, to which it was supposed he gave himself up, had passed unperceived, it is difficult to believe that the agents of the Préfecture attached to his person did not notice anything queer between the 6th and 8th of January, the eve of the assizes, particularly so in view of the fact that the lawsuit was one which threatened the Ministry, if not more. The comings and goings between the Avenue de Neuilly and the rue Louis-Philippe, the discussions at the *loge* of Pierre Jondeau—were not all these noticed?

It is strange that when M. Menard threw his swarm of insults at Syveton when he stood in the stairway of Menard's domicile, that no neighbour heard them, and, as neighbours sometimes do, spread the news. Menard made no secret of his pre-conjugal misadventures, any more than he did of his contemporary ones; everyone knew of them. To begin with, his partner Potel, who, with thorough lack of discretion, communicated his impressions to his friends and acquaintances! Yet presumably the police were unaware of it!

If the police had known of it, the Government would also have been cognizant of it, in which case the enemy's gunpowder would have been considerably damped, his guns irretrievably spiked.

Whether the imputations of Margot, Anna, Louise and company were true or not, they furnished matter for too glorious a scandal to allow him who was the object of it all to die, and there is little doubt but that every detective assigned by the Government to shadow Syveton would have watched over the life of this adversary more carefully than that of a friend.

There are three hypotheses: accident, suicide, or murder. The first can be eliminated. Taking into consideration the arrangement of the gas-fire, the position of the body, the time, etc., an accident was almost impossible.

The next theory is that of suicide, the reason being that the Deputy was afraid of the scandal. Does this suggestion really hold water? It is doubtful, principally because

Syveton's guilt likewise is more than doubtful, in which case there would have been no scandal.

Three people accused him—Mme. Menard, Anna, Louise.

Mme. Menard, a very little while after her mother's marriage, accused Syveton of having outraged her. A medical examination proved the futility of the charge. After this the young person was sent to a boarding-school at Chantilly, where she had an intrigue with a jockey, whereupon she was sent to Spa; here she had a second intrigue with a young man. She returned to Paris; then she, a young girl accustomed to society, nineteen years old, commenced a liaison with a concierge, a part-time floor-scrubber. Such a past scarcely authorized her to play Lucretia.

Anna was summarily dismissed by Syveton, in whose service she then was, and went off without saying a word as to her master's intrigue with her, after which she went to the Menards, there to share her patronne's room and the favours of the knight of the scrubbing-brush! Decency forbids narrating how she pretended to have succumbed to the enterprises of Syveton. Were it true, this young person must have possessed a naïvity incompatible with the many rendezvous given to Jondeau in the latter's bachelor quarters in the rue d'Armaille.

Louise cannot be considered seriously; she was merely nondescript. Probably her one desire was to play a rôle in the public eye, for such was the impression she created, rather than revealing the legitimate resentment of outraged virtue.

Did Syveton admit his misdeeds? "Yes!" said his wife one day; the next she denied it. In any event she is the only one to whom the Deputy is supposed to have confessed. Actually there is not the slightest proof of the misconduct of Syveton, and considering that, according to some of the witnesses, it had been chronic ever since 1895, it is difficult to think that in all those years no one had discovered the fact.

Thus, when a close scrutiny of Syveton's actions is made, it is discovered that all the deeds of which he is accused have not the slightest *proved* foundation.

There remains the chief plaintiff, Mme Syveton. Considering the evidence which she gave to the *juge d'instruction*, the interviews she granted to the Press, all she said, at one time or another, contradicted itself. Considering, too, the way

in which she covered the memory of her husband in scandal and did not hesitate to betray her daughter's dishonour, she cannot be considered as either a reliable or an impartial witness.

Further, when the worthlessness of the accusers rendered doubtful the theory of suicide because of bad conduct, she attempted to accredit the theory of Syveton as a thief of the funds confided to him by the *Patrie Française*. Triumphantly she said : "Thus, am I honest?"—and restored to M. Jules Lemaître, President of the Ligue, 98,000 francs which she pretended had been given her by her husband. As a matter of fact, a number of people knew of the existence of this sum—M. de Souza, M. Courraly, and others. Nobody in well-informed Nationalist circles was unaware of where it was stored away. In any case Syveton did not have to account to anyone. The one purchase of "fiches"—a question of 40,000 francs—proves it, a purchase of which the President, M. Jules Lemaître was unaware. The 98,000 francs re-employed in Belgium by Syveton could have formed a supreme reserve. Had he used some of it for personal matters? The mere fact that at his death the sum remained intact is proof of his honesty.

So much for the accusation! What of the death?

Consulting the reports of the doctors and savants who conducted the research into the causes of death, Professor Pouchet, Doctor Socquet, Professor Bordas, M. Girard and M. Ogier, all admitted authorities, it is interesting to note the following :

First. That oxy-carbonated intoxication always entails an expulsion of a certain substance in respect of which all the experts remark : "Nothing of the sort was apparent with M. Syveton. In this relation, it would be almost an exceptional case."

Second. That in order to commit suicide under the conditions in which M. Syveton met death, it would be necessary to have an extraordinarily strong will and considerable strength to resist the convulsions and movements of the approaching death.

Third. That for Professor Pouchet the possibility of suicide in the conditions under consideration presents an "extremely hypothetical possibility"!

Fourth. That if M. Syveton had been subjected either voluntarily or otherwise to the action of a narcotic substance,

this intervention would have greatly assisted "the inhaling of toxic gas", but on the other hand that "if similar substances had been absorbed in doses strong enough to produce a narcotic effect, chemical research would probably be unable to trace it".

Thus the experts were in agreement on one point, that a narcotic would have facilitated death; but in disagreement on another, that suicide in itself might have been possible under the given conditions! According to Professor Pouchet, "This hypothesis would entail a series of circumstances so exceptional, that it would appear, on the whole, scarcely likely."

Why should Syveton have committed suicide? To escape from the dishonour of accusations of immorality? Most unlikely. To avoid the revelation of his supposed conversion of the funds to his own purposes? Most unnecessary, for the money existed. He had only to send word to have it forwarded by the Belgian *agent de change* with whom it was deposited. Did he fear to be belittled by "women's tales"? His triumph on the 9th would have thrown a mantle of political glory over his supposed turpitude.

Syveton, even if he did not lunch, certainly took a cup of coffee before shutting himself up in his office. Was there anything—a narcotic—poured into it by a person or persons unknown? Might not the unhappy man have fallen head downward on his desk, which would explain "the depression of hairy leather slightly triangular in form—about a centimetre long" on the left forehead, of which the first Socquet report speaks?*

Supposing after this, he had been transported, *still breathing* and laid on the gas-fire clay, would not the death have been made to look like suicide? The only proof of suicide would have been if Syveton had left a note to that effect, but this he did not do.

However, no further light has been shed upon his death from that day to this, and unless further disclosures are ever made, even if there are any—a most unlikely possibility—Syveton's memory will be disgraced for ever by the fact that he is adjudged to have died a suicide.

* Presumably the same wound which Mme. Syveton is supposed to have dressed upon their return from the Menards.

BEAUTY IN THE BOX

XIV.—BEAUTY IN THE BOX

MADAME STEINHEIL

PROBABLY no celebrated case has excited so much feverish interest in France as did the notorious trial of Madame Steinheil—always excepting the Dreyfus case, which nearly split the country in twain, when friends became enemies, and families quarrelled on the momentous question as to whether Dreyfus was guilty or not of the charge brought against him.

Yet, if the Steinheil case did not thus inflame the people into a smouldering fury of intolerance, it cannot be said that the interest displayed was much less, nor that the drama was less pronounced, or that the sensations attendant on such cases were less astounding. Perhaps it was just that political touch—so intensified in the Dreyfus case, and also more or less apparent in the Syveton case, mentioned elsewhere in this book—that made the difference. Strangely enough, in comparing the two, it is interesting to note that even into the Steinheil trial there crept an echo of *l'affaire Dreyfus*, as will be read.

There are four chapters to this extraordinary story, the first of which opens in the year of 1885, when along the route, bordered by fir trees, which stretched along under the buttresses of the Jura and the Vosges, a young girl of sixteen years of age, mounted on a chestnut mare, galloped along the road, drunk with air and speed.

Her pure complexion rapidly reddened with the contact of the fresh mountain wind, her thick tresses of hair billowed out behind her, while her lissom figure swayed rhythmically to the stride of the horse. The *tout ensemble* was a glorious

picture of budding womanhood, a chrysalis already hinting of the beautiful butterfly-to-be.

Beside her rode an elderly man who watched every movement, pride plainly betraying itself in his eyes.

"Give a little rein to Cleopatra, loosen the bridle, tighten the snaffle."

"Yes, Grandfather," she said obediently.

They returned to Beaucourt at a canter, the horses sweating lightly. With a gloved hand Meg stroked their necks, until a strong arm lifted her out of the saddle.

"Well done, my little girl, for a first time. For recompense, to-night I will tell you a lovely story."

That evening after dinner she impatiently joggled the memory of her grandfather. "My story, Grandfather," said she, and Grandfather Rau obediently recounted a strange occurrence which had happened near by, concerning the tax-collector of Montbeliard, ex-officer of Reichshoffen, who was found one morning bleeding from several wounds, and gagged by his mouth. Men with red beards, clothed in long black blouses, said he, had tried to assassinate him with a view to smashing open his safe.

Later it was discovered that this story was a myth, that he had made arrangements to steal the 27,000 francs therein for himself!

"Red beards—black blouses——" murmured the adolescent, still a child, who yawned, with closing eyes, as the evening waned.

This, then, is the end of chapter one, insignificant to all intents and purposes; yet that gallop, and the story told to Meg by her grandfather, were to feature very dramatically in the trial, many years later, of which this young girl, Meg, was to be the "star".

By the time she was eighteen years old Meg was a slight young girl, with drooping eyelids calling to life—to the unknown life which, in her imagination, she enriched with untold splendour. Already she was a prize well worth winning in the eyes of the young men of her district, while curious neighbours asked one another whether the grocer's son, Fernande, would be the one fated to open the doors of her

dream? It seemed not, for an officer of the Army appeared on the scene and soon proved himself more than qualified to lift her to the saddle, and to escort her on horseback through the ravines of the Vosges. Before long it was evident that this Lieutenant Scheffer, with whom she had danced at the last ball at Belfort, and whom she met on the station every Wednesday when she went to take her music-lesson at Montbeliard, was to be the lucky one.

Unfortunately for love's young dream, M. and Mme. Japy had other ideas on the subject, but they were blissfully unconscious of the budding romance, until one day Monsieur Japy seized from the hands of the maidservant a letter written by Meg to Lieutenant Scheffer.

Naturally there was a passionate scene, the father angry, the daughter rebellious.

The subsequent meal was eaten in silence, Mme. Japy in tears most of the time. In between the courses she chided her daughter : "Marguerite, you must obey your father. You must go with your brother to Belfort, ask for those letters to be returned to you which in your folly you have addressed to this man. Then you will leave for Biarritz, to stay with your sister, and while there realize that you have compromised yourself for ever."

In those days it was of little use a daughter attempting to pit her strength against that of her parents, and before many more hours had passed by Meg had had to capitulate. Nevertheless, it was a terrible journey to Belfort for the unhappy girl, and when the officer gave her back the packet of letters she believed her heart would break.

The departure for Biarritz was no more pleasant, and by the time the train moved out of Montbeliard her handkerchief was drenched in tears. After all, there was every excuse ; it was young love, flying from its first innocent caress, the last adieu to the district of her birth, and to childhood's dreams.

The next act of Meg's life took place in sun-drenched Biarritz. Once settled in that resort, Meg scarcely went out. Her sister, Mme. Heer, had orders to keep her strictly under her eye, and no confidantes were allowed except her piano—the piano, which, in that impenetrable time of sorrow, she played as only a musician can play, and still more, one

who has experienced the depths of misery. Few visitors ever brightened the long hours, and those whom she did see were—to her—of an uninteresting age. Only one man called often enough to become one of the familiar visitors of the household, and he was an artist.

One day Mme. Heer entered Meg's room, visibly excited : "Meg—M. Steinheil—he has asked for your hand in marriage !"

The young girl's expression showed great astonishment. "Who ? M. Steinheil !"

"Yes, the artist who is painting the cathedral windows."

Meg began to protest—she was young ; he had already a grey beard.

"But what of that ?" And her sister proceeded to throw in her face the memory of the folly of Belfort. Moreover, Mme. Heer continued, he was Alsatian, like herself, and he earned a good income—20,000 francs a month ! He had gained the Cross, and also the medal of the Salon. He had a reputation—almost glory ! Nephew of Meissonier, he already outshone Meissonier—for her who would like to know Paris it was a partnership beyond her dreams !

In the end she gave in by agreeing to the marriage, having in her mind that she could afterward lead her own life. He was certainly twenty years her senior, but it was liberty—and Paris !

The marriage was celebrated on the 9th of July, 1890, after which the pair lived in a small hotel, in a distant quarter of Paris, the impasse Ronsin, in the rue de Vangirard.

There a daughter, Marthe, was born to them. The new-comer did not serve to lighten expenses. Times were hard, and in spite of income brought to the marriage by the *dot* of 3,000 francs a year, difficulties were soon felt in the little hotel of Montparnasse.

It was necessary to keep up an appearance, and the artist was worried to death.

However, one day in 1897 the little family started for the Alps, to arrive in Maurienne during the grand manœuvres.

While mounting the side of Thermignon, Mme. Steinheil, as she now was, noticed someone who eyed her with great insistence, and who spoke to a general beside him who, in his turn, fixed upon her a pair of kindly eyes.

The next day a stranger called upon them ; quite politely but inquisitively he asked of the painter his name and profession, the motive of his sojourn in those parts. He excused his visit by explaining that there were so many spies about to see the manœuvres that it was necessary to have knowledge of everyone in the neighbourhood. As soon as he learned that Steinheil was an artist and the well-known nephew of the great Meissonier, he ceased to question further and took his adieu.

The next day brought an invitation for Mme. and M. Steinheil to dine with M. Felix Faure. The man who had been watching the movements of the troops was none other than the President of the Republic !

"Our fortune is made, my dear," exclaimed the fifty-year-old husband. "I feel that this will end in an order for a picture."

That night Meg was the queen of the banquet, and indeed it did end by an order for a picture.

During the next two years fortune smiled on their little household, for the President befriended Steinheil and his wife, in consequence of which they were invited to all the official social gatherings and thus became known ; Mme. Steinheil to be admired, her husband to be patronized.

However, misfortune always strikes when it is least expected, and one night in February 1899, the day before Mardigras, a carriage deposited Mme. Steinheil before her door, afterward to gallop quickly away.

Quickly letting herself into the house the young woman rushed to her room, to where her maid, piqued with curiosity, followed her, to see that her mistress's hat was torn off, that her beautiful hair, of which one strand had been cut, was falling down in cascades upon her shoulders. Beneath the jacket was exposed her ravishing bust—she was unclothed down to the waist ! Feverishly she undressed, and threw herself sobbing into bed.

Presently the door opened. Her husband entered talking volubly :

"Oh, my child ! What a dreadful calamity ! Someone has telephoned me from the Elyseé. Our friend Felix Faure has just died."

He stopped short—those convulsive sobs which suddenly

attracted his attention rendered him dumb. Then he disappeared. Silently the door closed behind him. He had just seen the reverse of the married life picture !

Not for many years did the secret of what happened that night leak out. The President had died—alone with Mme. Steinheil—and so sudden was his death that his life flickered out even as he was stroking the lovely masses of her hair, and so tightly did his fingers grip together in the last final spasm, that the hair had to be cut before Mme. Steinheil could be released from the clutch of the dead man.

Again want entered into the household. The impressionists came into fashion ; the pupil of Meissonier was no longer remembered, and since the death of the President the invitations for official affairs had brusquely ended.

The chase for clients recommenced, and the Steinheil gave many elegant dinners ! These must have caused much rancour in the heart of the little woman, condemned to the life of a Bohemian bourgeoisie, for speaking of them she described them thus at the trial :

“Ah, those worldly women who envy me when I give a little dinner. They who have the time to dress in front of their mirrors—to curl their hair—to command a visit from the hairdresser. They do not realize that while I am waiting for them I do the cooking and light the candles, and they admire me and praise me—and all that to try and sell Adolphe’s pictures.”

It was some time later when a certain Monsieur M—— C—— became acquainted with Mme. Steinheil. The friendship ripened, became intimate—he took, in the environs of Paris, at Bellevue, a chalet, the “Vert Lodge”, which Monsieur and Madame Steinheil occupied, calling themselves Monsieur and Madame Prévost. Steinheil complacently accepted this fact, although the lease was in the name of his wife.

After that much time passed by. M—— C—— faded from their lives ; instead, a Monsieur de B—— reigned in Meg’s heart.

This person ordered his portrait to be painted in hunting kit, and cap and riding-jacket of sombre velvet, for the order was the only way to console Meg in her misery.

Indeed, to Madame Steinheil, life was a misery of economy. The painter was not able to bring in more than 10,000 francs a

year, though it was necessary to keep up the retinue of two houses and to have two servants. Moreover, the forties were approaching—the autumn of a woman in those days. Of positive necessity there existed an “Aunt Lili”—generous “Aunt Lili”, of no known surname, or family, and whose address often varied. She was an excellent relation, who heaped on Meg jewellery and money. Aunt Lili, whose acquaintance the painter never tried to make, but whose exact position used to bring a questioning frown between the eyebrows of Meg’s mother—specially when Mme. Japy became aware of the sad reasons for running a separate house under a false name!

Next came M. M. Borderel, a rich landowner from the Ardennes. Meg bewitched him till he was her slave.

He bought two pictures, and gave himself up to all extravagances, though now and again pulling himself together when least expected.

The 30th of May, a Saturday, Mme. Japy arrived from Beaucourt to stay some time in Paris with her daughter, Mme. Heer. Mme. Steinheil met her at the station and took her back to the impasse Ronsin. It had been the intention originally for Mme. Japy to proceed afterward to Bellevue, but owing to the fact that her legs were bad Mme. Steinheil went alone, for Marthe happened to be staying there. When she got there it was to find that Marthe was not very well. She therefore telephoned to M. Buisson—an associate of her husband in some ceremonial affair, and father of the fiancé of the young girl—to look after Marthe and pass the night at “Vert Lodge”, saying that her own husband had various business to get through, and that Mme. Japy, her mother, was too unwell to leave Paris that night. To this request M. Buisson assented, so Mme. Steinheil returned to Paris.

Toward nine o’clock the household—that night consisting of Mme. and M. Steinheil, Mme. Japy, and the valet—went up to bed. The desire for a night-cap having been expressed, the *valet de chambre* brought up to Mme. Steinheil one bottle of brandy and three glasses, so she prepared the “grog”, massaged and bandaged her mother’s legs, and then, having given her own room to Mme. Japy, went to bed in Marthe’s room. She undid her beautiful hair and plaited it, undressed,

slipped into a nightdress of blue cotton, and snuggled in between the sheets.

In the morning, at 6.30 a.m., Remy, the valet, came down to prepare the house for a new day. As he passed by Mlle. Marthe's room he heard a faint cry for help, whereupon he rushed in, to find Madame Steinheil groaning on the bed, bound hand and foot and nigh on strangled. To wake his master Remy ran into the neighbouring room. Monsieur Steinheil was in the bathroom, a string round his neck—dead. In Madame's room Mme. Japy lay inertly upon the bed—also dead.

The Steinheil *affaire* had commenced ! Upon this dramatic tableau, upon this poignant note, chapter two of Mme. Steinheil's life comes to an end.

Double assassination, which had barely missed being triple, was the balance-sheet that presented itself on the bloody dawn of that Pentecost.

In answer to the terrified cries uttered by Remy, a neighbour, one Monsieur Lecoq, engineer, came running in. Later he was followed by M. Buchotte, Commissary of Police, who proceeded to make a few first investigations ; afterward followed Monsieur Acheray, family doctor, the doctors Lefèvre and Puech, and lastly M. Hamard, Chief of the Préfecture de Police.

They began by assisting the poor widow to compose herself, following which the doctors held two consultations and remarked on the following :

Firstly, the cords which bound her were hardly drawn at all tight—"merely played with", declared Dr. Lefèvre.

Secondly, Dr. Coutois-Suffit, doctor for the police, pointed out that the neck of Mme. Steinheil carried no trace of violence, and that the marks on her hands and feet were entirely superficial. Also she had on her knee a blue mark caused by ink or pastel.

Then they passed into the other rooms.

To enter the room of Mme. Japy they went through an office where an upset ink-bottle and a large flagon of ink

—violet black—were the only signs of a struggle they could find.

From there little drops of ink were dripped right up to the bedside of Mme. Japy as though they had fallen from the hem of a shirt, which had dipped into the pool. The drops were distant from 80 to 90 centimetres ; the last was 1.04 metre from the one preceding it.

The corpse of the woman lay across the bed. A cord, tightly pulled, was around her neck, while the face was enveloped in a sort of dark head-wrap. A gag had been stuffed into her mouth, the teeth of which were injured.

On the right was a sort of landing from which opened the bathroom adjoining the room of Monsieur Steinheil, which was separated from that of Marthe by one stair. On his back, with his legs bent under him, lay the painter. He also had been strangled, and his eyes were bruised as though he had been vigorously punched, while on one finger was a blue mark—the same blue mark which was found on the knee of his wife. Otherwise there was no trace of violence.

A few drawers were rummaged on the first floor, but the kitchen from whence were taken the cords which had bound and killed the victims was in perfect order, except that on the table lay several jewels, a little money, and a man's glove.

After this investigation they returned to the groaning survivor, who, in a feeble voice, recounted her story of the crime.

She was awakened, so she told them, by a cloth which someone threw over her head just as the large clock in the hall was chiming midnight, after which a brutal hand seized her by the throat.

Blows were directed on to her head. By the glimmer of a dark lantern she saw by the bed "three bearded men and one brown-looking woman, all of an odour most repugnant", dressed in long black cloaks and wearing queer-shaped hats with large brims.

"Come on, my girl," said one with a strong foreign accent to the woman—possibly his daughter. Then he turned to Mme. Steinheil: "Where is the money and the jewels ; if you tell us we will neither kill you, nor your father nor mother."*

* "Mother" in this case meant Mme. Steinheil herself, for in the opinion of the widow the murderers mistook her for Marthe—especially in view of the fact that she was sleeping in Marthe's room.

Frightened by the underlining threat, she informed them of a drawer in which Monsieur Steinheil had lately placed 6,000 francs, whereupon they came to the rail of the bed, stifled her with a gag of cotton-wool and hit her.

After that she fainted, not to awake until the early morning. She then managed to eject the gag from her mouth with her tongue, and called for assistance.

During this recital M. Hamard noticed an old servant standing at the foot of the bed, a bottle of smelling-salts in hand, eyeing her mistress in a hard and anxious manner, although, in his opinion, at times the look was almost maternal.

"You were in the house?" this woman was asked.

"No, Monsieur, I am the cook, Mariette. I was at Bellevue with Marthe, but early this morning I received a message by telephone. You can imagine how I hurried."

She bent over the poor victim, her thick-set figure, her scarred face with its heavy protruding jaw in strong contrast to her sobbing mistress.

"Crime of debauchery!" M. Hamard pronounced.

That version was that also of M. Leydet, lawyer, and familiar friend of l'impasse Ronsin, whom the charm of the young and unhappy widow, like so many others, had not failed to seduce.

It is right to say this much about the initial inquiry: it was conducted in a manner which might be described as flabby.

For instance, the examining magistrate took the notes as he found them, left the arrangement of the official paper to his secretary, who took the signatures of the witnesses, and disappeared. The consequence was as follows:

Mme. Steinheil, according to her own account, was bound to the bed by her arms and legs, her nightdress dragged up round her neck, the sheets were around her feet, a rope was round her waist.

At the assizes, Remy Couillard, who untied his mistress, declared that he had found her covered over by the sheets, the nightdress was to her knees only. A simple knot tied her

hands, which were crossed on her chest; another cord, far from tight, bound her down.

Therefore the magistrate must have signed the report without reading it, and in this way failed to make one report confirm the other. Naturally the difference in these two versions is of the utmost importance—as will be seen later on—for supposing Mme. Steinheil's account to be a correct one, obviously she must have been innocent of any participation in the crime; but on the other hand, were the valet's report actual fact, there is every suggestion that the widow was bound down to the bed by her own hands.

Other examples—a detective of a private agency, M. Martin, who called himself Muller, perceived on the night of the crime a motor stationed motionless in the impasse. He declared he had taken the number—by a curious coincidence he died within the month, taking his secret with him to the tomb. If the Préfecture had only acted quickly enough this could not have happened, and the number of the car would be on the records to this day.

A certain Arthur Reeves, on the 2nd of June, wrote to say that during the night of the 30th of May he saw, in the rue de Vangirard, two bearded men, accompanied by a young man and a woman, carrying a valise.

“Why do you follow us?” one of these strange persons asked him in menacing tones, and Arthur Reeves made off. That declaration was evidently considered of so little worth that no one troubled to find Arthur Reeves to question him more fully on this mysterious circumstance.

In this way the inquiry rolled on its happy-go-lucky road.

As soon as she had recovered from the shock of that terrible night, Mme. Steinheil left impasse Ronsin to go and rest at the rue Edmond Valentine at the house of Comte d'Arlon, an old friend of the family, and happily, just about then, another tragedy, the horrible massacre of the rue de la Pèpinière, full of details of the most horrible and repugnant kind, turned public attention away from Mme. Steinheil, and the affair seemed as though it would be shelved.

In all probability the widow, surrounded by everybody's sympathy, would have been left in peace for evermore if, on her return from the sea-coast, some extraordinary demon had not prompted her to make a noisy re-entry on the scene.

Just five months after the drama, the 30th of October, Marcel Hutin of the *Echo de Paris* received a line from Mme. Steinheil praying him to call upon her instantly, as she wanted his assistance.

"In what way," asked he, "can I serve you?"

"There is an interesting clue which has just been brought to light. On the 2nd of June, forty-eight hours after the assassination of my husband, Villiers, an employee of the Metro, discovered, torn up, a card of invitation to the exhibition of my husband's pictures.

"The envelope, which was shut, contained a second card on which were written three addresses, of which one was of the dresser of a theatre.

"On questioning the dresser of the theatre it was learned that three Jews had left there, where they were engaged, between 5 and 6 o'clock on the day of the crime; moreover, that with them disappeared the costumes which they had been wearing in this play—the long cloaks and tall hats of Jewish priests. It was surely in this quarter that one ought to direct the research."

Hutin was a wise man; he shook his head.

"Once again, what can I do," he said, "to serve you?"

"Put all that in your paper, so that in justice everything shall be made clear."

"Put it in my paper! It would be far better for you to write me a letter, explaining these happenings."

No sooner said than done. Forty-eight hours afterward the *Echo de Paris* published the letter.

It was from that moment that—apart from the first sensation of the initial murder which, of course, caused a considerable stir which subsequently calmed down when nothing happened—the Steinheil affair really began.

The letter from Mme. Steinheil, published in the *Echo de Paris*, startlingly revived the public interest in the murder; more, it achieved the end for which Mme. Steinheil aspired—it stirred the police to fresh endeavours, and, acting upon instructions, the Préfecture threw itself headlong into the fray.

The first move on the part of the detectives was to show to Mme. Steinheil a photograph of an American by the name of Burlington, and upon Mme. Steinheil acknowledging that the photograph bore a distinct resemblance to the leader of the

band of robbers who had committed the double murder, they arranged for her to see the red-bearded man with a view to identifying him more definitely.

This Mme. Steinheil did after having seen him several times. Needless to say the news was served red-hot to the public. Judge, therefore, the commotion when Burlington was able to establish an irreproachable and unshakable alibi !

The sensation continued unabated, and ugly rumours began to spread concerning one whom the public accused—and that one, chosen as the bullseye for the well-aimed shafts of the man in the street, was Mme. Steinheil herself !

Reporters, as well as police and public, began to take a hand in the game. While detectives pestered the unfortunate woman at frequent intervals, the reporters did not even allow her time to think, but in a constant succession of relays besieged her morning, noon and night, asking one thing, suggesting a second, disclaiming a third, until Mme. Steinheil's head whirled. Nor were the postmen more kind, for each mail brought her in a shoal of anonymous letters, many openly accusing her of the murder, others informing her that the valet was the murderer, or else Mariette Wolfe the cook, or Alexandre Wolfe the cook's son.

Meanwhile Mme. Steinheil—it must be regretfully acknowledged, for the fact was proved time and again—began to complicate matters by indulging in a series of untruths ; she lied first about one thing, then another. Frantically she pleaded with the Press to urge the police to discover the murderer, to her counsel she said the same ; she did not neglect to harass the Préfecture.

Apparently investigation proving too slow for her, she determined to see that Justice should move, and so she concocted a scheme to set the police in motion.

It was necessary to find another culprit. This was destined to be one, Cornan, an old *valet de chambre* of the Steinheil's. The widow denounced him as one of the criminals. Unfortunately for her, as with Burlington, with him also an alibi was incontestably established.

The plan of finding someone to bear the blame seemed as though it would miscarry, but Mme. Steinheil was not yet at the end of her resources. On the 10th of November she confided to M. Dubot, reporter to the *Paris Journal*, that she had

the strongest suspicions of Remy Couillard. This astute journalist, scenting a possible scoop for his paper, persuaded her to go with him to Remy's room. His trunk was open, in it they found a pocket-book which they opened and discovered a letter addressed by Marthe to her fiancé.

Next day Remy was sent for and told to produce his valise ; it was opened and found to contain not only the letters, but wrapped in tissue paper an irregular little string of pearls—a humble New Year present of Monsieur Steinheil to his wife, one of the many items of jewellery supposed to have been stolen on the night of the murder. In consequence of this discovery the police locked Remy up.

"I am innocent," was Remy's plea when accused of the murder. On the 21st a thorough examination was made of his room. A shining stone scintillating in a crack in the boards was found.

Alas ! Mme. Steinheil in wishing to prove too much against others had, in reality, proved her capacity for lying.

Monsieur Dubot declared on that the day of the first opening of the valise the pearl necklet was not there. Monsieur Souloy, jeweller, came forward to explain that about the 12th of June he himself had received the necklet from Mme. Steinheil for the purpose of taking the pearls out of their setting, and to reset and thoroughly examine the very jewels which were supposed to have been stolen from Mme. Steinheil. These two witnesses, therefore, made it quite obvious that, firstly, the pearl necklet had never been stolen, and secondly, that Mme. Steinheil herself must have put the jewellery into Remy's valise for the purpose of implicating him.

To explain the meaning of her actions the widow was summoned to appear before the examining magistrate, and only after a very searching examination by M. Leydet was she allowed to go home. There she found awaiting her two leading Paris journalists, M. Marcel Hutin and M. de Labruyère. These two men wrung from her the confession which the authorities had all day long endeavoured to obtain, namely, that she had plotted to make the valet Couillard appear guilty in order to save "a person she loved".

"My conscience impels me to tell you that Couillard is innocent. I placed the jewels in his pocket-book. The jewels

were never stolen. It was a sham burglary. About the middle of June I had the jewels at Bellevue and afterward I gave them to M. Souloy (the jeweller) because I feared they might be found by the authorities."

Pressed still further by the journalists she then admitted tearfully that the jewels had never been stolen, that only money had disappeared.

Asked why she had accused Remy Couillard, she replied that she had done so to turn suspicion from others. "From whom?" was the question which naturally followed. For some time she refused to say more until the two men informed her of her own impending arrest.

Panic-stricken, she then began to confess. "The murderer is Alexandre Wolfe—I swear that I was not implicated in the crime. I swear that I did not incite him to kill my husband and mother. Wolfe came to rob us, thinking we were at Bellevue. As soon as he saw me he threw himself upon me and gagged me. My husband and mother were aroused and my mother shrieked. Wolfe killed them both. I was the only witness.

"Wolfe took advantage of this fact, and threatened that if I denounced him to the police he would swear that I had incited him to commit the murder.

"He terrorized me. I know I am lost, but I want it known that I kept silent solely because of the threats of this man, who wished to ruin my daughter and myself."

Such was Mme. Steinheil's new confession. Astounded by this new twist the journalists hurried away, after extracting a promise from her that she would repeat her confession before M. Leydet.

Three hours later Mme. Steinheil, her daughter and Mariette Wolfe took a cab to the office of M. Hamard.

He was asleep when they arrived, but he wasted no time in arising, and within a few minutes was with Mme. Steinheil. "I have come to confess that I had the pearls," she admitted.

"I expected you, Madame," said M. Hamard.

Later on that day Wolfe was arrested. He strongly denied his guilt and said he could prove an alibi. He and his mother were then confronted with his accuser, and the scene which followed was anything but a pleasant one.

Firstly the old cook overwhelmed her mistress with

reproaches, and certainly no one can say she was not justified. Her attitude shook Mme. Steinheil severely ; the accusation began to show signs of suspicious cracks and fissures.

It was finally shattered when M. Hamard pointed out to the unhappy woman that every moment of Wolfe's had been traced that fatal night, and his innocence positively confirmed. Mme. Steinheil became still more pale.

On the 26th of November the climax of this mysterious case began to approach, for Mme. Steinheil herself was arrested for the murder of her husband and mother.

That day Mme. Steinheil was examined so long that the sum total of hours amounted to nigh upon fifteen. Suffering from an almost inconceivable strain, her face deathly white, her eyes piteous, her beauty seemed all the more emphasized, her appearance more ethereal, particularly so in its contrast to the black, crêpe-bordered dress and veil which she wore that day.

When Wolfe and she were confronted for the second time the man exhibited violent rage ; when Mme. Steinheil again accused him with all the regained convictions in her voice, which had gradually faded away during the long interrogation of the day before, he broke into a stream of vituperation, insulting her with all the forcefulness of his uneducated nature. To all of this Mme. Steinheil answered in a similar strain, and for quite an hour these two continued this verbal warfare, during which time the magistrate said nothing, but merely listened and took copious notes.

After this occurred one of those dramatic surprises so beloved of examining magistrates, which are, needless to say, carefully arranged by them. The door of the room opened and Marthe Steinheil rushed in sobbing bitterly. She threw herself at her mother's feet and cried out : "Mother, mother, confess ! Tell them everything, tell them everything !"

Mme. Steinheil stood still weeping piteously, but said nothing, until the atmosphere in the room became so tense that M. Leydet himself shed tears.

If the heart-rending scenes were meant to be a trap it failed dismally, for until the interview ended the accused woman continued to reiterate that she had nothing to do with the murder, and she was removed to St. Lazare Prison—just about the same time as Wolfe was being released.

Needless to say the news of the arrest, when it filtered through to the public, gave rise to a tremendous sensation. It was at this time that the affair began to assume a notoriety equal to that almost of the Dreyfus case ; in fact, as already related, it became an echo of it, as did so many subsequent trials in the records of French legal history, for the rumour began to circulate that the double murder was political, that the object of the criminals had been to secure important papers, once belonging to the late President Felix Faure, relating to the innocence or guilt of Major Dreyfus, which papers had been put into the care of Mme. Steinheil some time before the President's death, it having been his intention to write up his memoirs in the manner so beloved of our present decade.

Climax followed climax, sensation followed sensation. The day of Mme. Steinheil's arrest M. Leydet resigned his position in the case, and passed his task on to M. André.

In the meantime, M. Hamard, who was exercising an extraordinary skill in his attempt to unravel the mystery, admitted to a theory which, in light of subsequent events, ought to be considered as most important.

"I see in this crime," he said, "the work of one brain and of one pair, *or more** of hands. No woman could have tied herself up or have tied up Mme. Japy as she was found. This was man's work, and the work of a man or men accustomed to brutality. The brain was Mme. Steinheil's, but the hands were hands of crime experts."

Such was the intense excitement which prevailed in Paris that in two separate cases two women were arrested for stealing a newspaper containing the latest developments of the crime. In each instance they were proved penniless, and the policemen who arrested them paid for the papers, stating that they could well comprehend the temptation.

On Saturday, the 28th of November, the interest in the mystery continued unchecked ; in fact it was intensified by reason of the constant succession of disclosures.

In the first case, the lover for whom it was said Mme. Steinheil was ready to risk so much was discovered in the person of M. Borderel, mayor of a town in the Ardennes. M. Maurice Borderel, examined by M. André, gave evidence of how Mme.

* The italics are mine.

Steinheil and he first became acquainted, of how their lips met in the first lingering kiss of love, and how subsequently he became her lover, paying for the rent of the villa, and, in addition, giving her certain sums of money.

Later that day M. Borderel is supposed to have given an illuminating interview to the *Matin* in which he gave evidence of the most damning kind against his mistress, but in view of the disgraceful attitude of the whole French Press on the "*affaire Steinheil*", the literal interpretation, as given by the journalist in question, must assuredly be taken with a respectable grain of salt.

For instance, according to M. Borderel, who apparently had little hesitation about revealing full details of his amorous adventures with the charming Mme. Steinheil, she once said to him that she had but one love and one hate in her life—the love was for him, the hate for her husband and her mother. Also, when he arrived in Paris soon after the murders had been committed, he was (according to the *Matin*) suspicious concerning the story Mme. Steinheil told him regarding the affair, and said to her that her tale sounded anything but probable, and that she was to justify herself to the public before he would see her again.

If that were so, then a motive for the murders instantly became apparent, but further comment upon this is unnecessary at this particular point in the case.

M. André, who seems to have been as equally prejudiced against Mme. Steinheil as was M. Leydet for her, ordered the bodies of Mme. Japy and M. Steinheil to be exhumed, working upon the hypothesis that Mme. Steinheil had, earlier in the evening, administered either poison or a sleeping draught to the unfortunate victims. His reason for this was certainly feasible, however, for it was a significant fact that the position of the hands and arms of the two murdered people plainly revealed the fact that neither man nor woman had managed to tear away the cords round their necks with which they were presumably strangled, consequently it was suggested that they were dead or in a comatose condition when the cords were put around their necks.

On the other hand, however, Dr. Courtois-Suffit, who performed the first autopsy on the bodies, told the magistrate that he was quite certain that death had been due to strangu-

lation, though, of course, lacking any other theory of death he had not searched for traces of poison.

By the beginning of December Mme. Steinheil became known as "The Red Widow", but from this time onward there is little to be learned by the repetition of the evidence extracted day by day by M. André from Mme. Steinheil herself and other witnesses, for much of this will be related further in this story when the trial itself is reached.

What is interesting, however, is to note that when the prisoner was conveyed to the Conciergerie, the prison which is underneath the Palais de Justice, she was, by a strange coincidence, lodged in the same cell which had previously sheltered the notorious swindler, Mme. Humbert.

Couillard, after his release, became a hero to his own kind. Wherever he went he was fêted and mobbed; a song was written around him which he was forced to sing at a café, and the National Union of Employees and Domestic Servants asked him to preside at a meeting on the subject of crime among the middle classes!

The next twelve months—it was not until the 3rd of November, 1909, that Mme. Steinheil was actually brought to trial—was for the accused a life of endless examinations, of being transported from St. Lazare to the Conciergerie, and from thence back to her cell again.

Certainly for her, prison life was less tedious than for all the rest of the inmates, for she was considered almost as a privileged person. Besides being notorious by reason of the charge for which she was incarcerated, she was more or less a person of importance by reason of the social set in which she had moved previous to the crime, and because of her intimate acquaintance with a late President of the Republic.

During the rests which by law she was permitted, between the many bouts of exhaustive examination by M. André, she had her daughter to visit her, or else she needleworked or consulted her counsel. She was also befriended by the priest, Father Arboux.

Nevertheless, so slowly runs the course of justice in France, that it was not until the 3rd of November, 1909, that her trial was held, almost a year after her arrest!

By that time the case against her was very black indeed. From one untruth to another, she involved herself in such a

maze of imaginary occurrences that it began to appear that nothing could save her.

During the first two days of November preparations were made for the trial. Without doubt these were more than necessary, for all Paris, all France, was seething with excitement.

The rush for tickets to attend the trial was tremendous, M. de Valles, the President of the Court, refusing more than 3,000 applicants. Moreover, not only were the public barred, but also members of the families of the jurymen, as was the usual custom.

The only people admitted to the trial were forty French and twenty foreign journalists, one hundred lawyers in their robes, two doctors, detectives and witnesses, and one hundred members of the public admitted through the gateway of the Palais de Justice.

During these few days Mme. Steinheil was very excited and quite hopeful as to the ultimate verdict. Most of the time she occupied herself in seeing that her personal appearance was at its zenith of attractiveness; in fact, she obtained permission of the prison authorities to wear her hair in curl papers all one day in order to ensure such being the case. Her black mourning dress she had sent out to be renovated.

On Wednesday, the 3rd, the trial began. It was a trial of sensation after sensation, of which the first morning proved a foretaste. Hoping to be among the favoured one hundred people permitted to be present at the trial, nearly a thousand persons besieged the gates of the Palais de Justice the night before. The first hundred arriving received tickets, the remainder devoted their time in the attempt to buy those tickets, so much so that many were sold for £2, while some of the front row reservations exchanged hands for the sum of £50, though the average price ranged round £20.

At 11.30 the doors of the court were opened, and late entered the court in their picturesque red robes and toques. Afterward came the jury, the majority of whom were working men. Next the roll-call of the witnesses was made, and finally amid a deadly silence, entered Marguerite Steinheil, the "Red Widow".

Her appearance was theatrical enough to please even the most melodramatic playwright. Just opposite the jury box

a door suddenly opened, and the accused stood revealed, looking exquisitely beautiful.

The time she had spent in prison had not been wasted. She was dressed immaculately in black ; upon her head she wore a black toque with long crêpe streamers, which had the effect of showing up to the greatest advantage the rolling waves of her chestnut hair. The dress itself, quite plain, was perfect in its very simplicity, for it seemed moulded to her, revealing the symmetry of her figure, the tapering lines of her body and, where the square-cut yoke permitted, the ivory pallor of her neck.

There was a murmur of excited admiration ; she walked slowly forward toward her allotted place, and stood for a moment or so with her head inclined to one side, while she faced the presiding judge.

The scene was set, and the judge—a fearsome figure with his harsh voice, his piercing eyes, and his stern grey beard—opened the proceedings with the usual formal questions.

Then followed the indictment. This took nearly one hour and a half to read, and yet the whole of this was summarized in the last few words :

“Marguerite Jeanne Japy, widow of Steinheil, forty years of age, the prisoner, is accused, first, of having on the night of the 30th of May, 1908, committed voluntary homicide on the person of the widow of Edouard Japy, her legitimate mother ; second, of having on the night of the 30th of May, 1908, committed voluntary homicide on the person of Adolphe Steinheil, the two crimes with premeditation.”

Then began what was probably the most ghastly ordeal—one which was to last very many days—and one to which no other woman probably has ever been put in such a terrible degree.

It must be remembered that in France the presiding judge resembles more the figure of a prosecuting counsel with unlimited powers than the impartial holder of the scales of justice which he is in England. In France the prisoner is guilty until he—or she—has been pronounced innocent, so

that it is quite within the province of the judge to do all he can to prove that the law has not made a mistake.

The case was opened by the judge ; for nearly five hours Mme. Steinheil had to fight for her life against the bitter armour-piercing shafts of the judge, who seemed a bitter enemy to her more than anything else. His questions were pointed, significant, accusing, yet the wonderful woman who stood so alone, held her own, parried his blows, and sometimes returned them with good measure.

M. de Valles commenced by raking up the early details of Mme. Steinheil's life, endeavouring to prove that from early childhood she had been incorrigible and worthless.

"It is a lie !" she called out once, in ringing tones.

Every detail of the period of her life when she met Scheffer was discussed and fought out between the judge and the prisoner, he questioning in biting, incisive words, she answering in tones of passion, and denying deliberately that her friendship with the officer had been anything else other than of the most innocent kind.

Suddenly the judge switched over to Steinheil. "He was a broken man," said M. de Valles.

"That is not true," she replied, defending her husband's memory. "It is untrue to say that his life was a misery because of my unfaithfulness to him. I kept the knowledge from him. He never knew of my unfaithfulness."

M. de Valles flatly contradicted this statement, and then read a letter, addressed to his wife, from Adolphe Steinheil, which betrayed his knowledge of the fact that she possessed many lovers.

A horrible discussion followed concerning the morals of the unfortunate dead man, which terminated with a vocal duel in which the woman won.

Later it was she who attacked, for she denounced the long period of her imprisonment, and commented upon the torture to which she had been put by the constant examination.

To all of this the judge retorted by informing her that she had lied and lied again, that she had tried to mislead the course of justice.

In reply she interrupted by an outburst of wild eloquence, in which she related the happening of the night when she had

been worried into denouncing Wolfe. Then she admitted to the crime of hiding the pearl in Remy Couillard's pocket-book, but in extenuation she pleaded to the jury :

"I was despairing and beside myself. I knew that Remy was a thief. He had stolen my daughter's letters. I thought he might not know the truth about the murder, and that fear would make him confess. Oh, gentlemen, have pity on a woman who has sinned in married life because of her craving for affection which she did not get, and who has sinned against Remy out of her distraction which she repents with bitter tears !"

Actress or *ingénue* ? One might well ask, yet during the first day it appeared to observers as though Mme. Steinheil's impassioned eloquence had but little effect on the stolid jurymen.

The second day of the trial proved to be one of dramatic incidents, the first of which occurred about three o'clock in the afternoon. Maître Aubin informed the court that he had just had brought to him an extraordinary letter which he must read aloud. This missive he recited ; it stated that the writer was an accomplice of the murderer and that he wished to ease his conscience by public confession. It was signed Jean Lefèvre.

The sensation which this letter caused can well be imagined. It left everyone gasping with surprise, and most of all Mme. Steinheil herself, who turned deadly white.

Jean Lefèvre was brought before the court. Unfortunately his story was far from convincing, and while he had the bare outline of his tale pat enough, he could not stand cross-examination ; eventually it was proved that he was a half-wit, that his story was sheer imagination conceived in the spirit of martyrdom and sacrifice, and related that he might suffer instead of the beautiful prisoner whose photograph was found in his pocket.

After the court had effectively disposed of this man, the duel between judge and prisoner recommenced.

". . . M. Borderel said he would not marry a divorced woman, and you replied, 'Let us wait ; things may happen.' "

These last few words M. de Valle said in a voice of thunder and with a threatening gesture.

"I do not remember saying that," Mme. Steinheil replied,

then burst into a flood of tears. She conquered herself and then rose up furiously. "I will defend myself against you, M. le President, and will fight the accusation brought against me inch by inch, foot by foot, with all the strength which my innocence gives me. Yes, if I drop dead as I leave the court I will protect myself."

How a Lyceum audience would have cheered, yet said in that solemn court there was something awe-inspiring about her attitude. It was that of an innocent woman. Well might the people in court ask themselves: "Innocent woman, or magnificent actress?"

If the latter, then her acting was superb, magnificent. Every movement must have been studied, every word prepared. After she had spoken she stood still with her hand upraised in the air, then she sat down in her chair again and sobbed convulsively, with the result that when her paroxysm was finished and she raised her head again, her eyes were red and swollen, while real tears streamed down her cheeks.

"A Sarah Bernhardt of crime," whispered M. Henri Rochefort to a foreign correspondent who sat next to him.

There was more drama to follow. Concerning the fatal night she laughed scornfully at the suggestion that she had lured her mother to the impasse Ronsin and that there had been a narcotic in the soup which she did not herself touch.

"You went to sleep at eleven o'clock," stated the President, "and you awoke suddenly at twelve."

"Yes, I shall never forget that awful night," she replied. Then she turned to the jury.

"I awoke with a start," she murmured in a low, passionate voice, which penetrated to the farthest corner of the court. "I felt something on my face, and a hand—a hairy hand—was at my throat. I was in my daughter's room, as you know—a room of white walls with fine looking-glasses in it. The people round my bed held lanterns, and I saw on my right a woman with red hair and a man with a dark beard. I can see him now—his awful eyes are piercing my brain as I speak of him. His eyes are terrible. There were other men in the room, men dressed like priests, but they wore tall black hats. They were near mother's room. The man with the black beard and the red woman had revolvers in their hands."

This gave the judge an opportunity. "You contradicted

this story yourself, remember. You said that all your story was untrue ; you have contradicted it and retold it five or six times."

"I do not care. I am speaking the truth now. I swear it. I saw these people round my bed. One of the men said, 'Where is the money ?' and the woman asked, 'Where are the jewels ?' Oh, I can hear their voices now !

"I was afraid ; my teeth chattered and I felt cold. I was in an agony of terror, and pointed to my little drawing-room. I was in fear. . . . While they went to look for the money the woman sat by me with her revolver at my head.

"Mother cried 'Meg'. I heard her. I knew she was alive, and I thanked God for it. . . . Then they rushed at me, all of them together. . . . One of them knelt on my body and I fainted."

"How many men were there ?"

"Three men with beards, and one of them held me tightly by the wrists and hurt me."

"You have said that once before——" began the judge.

Mme. Steinheil shook with passion. "I have told all the truth, the whole truth. Don't try and shake me in my story. What is this justice which tortures a poor woman and tries to make her tell lies ?"

It did not need justice to assist her in that capacity, as M. André had found out time after time. Nevertheless, a liar is not necessarily a murderess, and certainly as she told her story, told it with the aplomb of a great actress, it seemed true, ever word of it.

The duel continued, the judge mercilessly attacking her upon point after point, until he, the accused and the court were fatigued and weary.

On the third day the ordeal was still more terrible for the widow, more particularly as the evidence appeared to turn more and more against her, and it was as though she were convicted out of her own mouth.

When the proceedings began Mme. Steinheil reappeared, still looking calm, though pale and shaky.

Almost at once M. de Valles began his tactics again, and if during the first two days his attack had been deadly, the third day it was worse. He commenced to question her on money matters.

"If there were money, where was it? Where did the money for the household come from . . .?"

"I never was in debt," she contested. "I made my own dresses and those of my daughter. I made the dresses of my husband's models. Yes, and I even made my husband's clothes, sometimes, and all his underwear and mine."

She shook her finger angrily at the judge. "How dare you, how dare you say that I had debts, and that I did not look after my husband? I did everything in the house. I did the washing myself. . . . Ah, if those women who came to my house envying me had only known what I had to do before I gave a dinner party. . . . I used to rush up and dress in five minutes, pin something in my hair . . . and all this because I had to do so, because I knew that the only way to sell pictures at a decent price was to give dinners that were, or, rather, looked, expensive."

"Come!" murmured M. de Valles, but Mme. Steinheil shook with passion.

"M. le President, I insist on being allowed to speak. I never had any debts, and I am explaining why. I did everything. I even painted and sold pictures of my own, sometimes pretending they were my husband's."

Suddenly, in the midst of these questions concerning financial matters, the judge switched round, and with the acuteness of a born inquisitor he said:

"After the crime, when Remy and the other men untied you, why did you not immediately rush in your mother's room to see how she was?"

In her usual way, when questions became too awkward to answer, she caused the judge to bend the point of his verbal rapier upon her impenetrable armours of womanhood. She burst into quiet, heartrending tears!

Her counsel could not stand the strain. "M. le President, my client asked, 'Why does not my husband come to me?' It is in the evidence that she asked for her husband."

"Please do not interrupt!" said the judge, who again turned to the accused. "You will make nobody understand, madame, why you, who say you loved your mother, remained quietly in bed when you were told that she was murdered."

At this point there was a disturbance. A lawyer in court

shouted out, "How infamous!" and had to be politely escorted out of the court by the municipal guard.

Soon after this, however, Mme. Steinheil made a rather bad impression upon the court, for she began to tell a garbled tale concerning her jewellery; that she had two sets of jewels, one real and one paste. Asked why she had sent her trinkets to be altered after the crime, she explained as the reason—she did not want her daughter to discover that they were presents from her many lovers.

It was obvious that the judge was not satisfied with this explanation, so with his customary merciless manner he detailed a list of them to the jury, then explained that in the list were rings and other trinkets which Mme. Steinheil had declared were stolen from her by the murderers.

"And on this," he shouted, "was a ring which you sent to the jeweller for alteration. You told him to take out the pearl and melt down the gold. Why?"

In reply to this Mme. Steinheil merely reiterated her previous statement—that she had done it for her daughter's sake.

"No," M. de Valles hurled at her. "It was because you knew that your list of stolen jewellery was a mere farce to mislead justice—because you knew your jewels never had been stolen—because you wanted them not to be recognized—because you wanted to pretend they were new ones."

To this there was nothing the accused could say, and at this point of the trial things certainly looked black against her, and it was at this inauspicious point that the President thought fit to end Steinheil's personal interrogatory.

By this time the prisoner looked ghastly, and it was evident that had the judge continued she would have broken down under the strain. Her face was deathly white, her eyes were lined and pouched, her head drooping.

On Saturday, Remy Couillard was the central character in the drama. Almost at once he was called upon to give evidence, and undoubtedly his appearance created a good impression. In his uniform of the 29th Dragoons he looked clean, handsome, and above all honest and fearless, though the defence tried to make him out as a stupid coward and a liar.

With a quiet voice he took the oath.

"You swear to speak without hatred?"

"Without hatred," he repeated.

"And without fear?"

"Without fear," he repeated decisively.

"You will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"Not a word more and not a word less. I swear it," and the soldier raised his hand.

In a distinct voice, which reached every corner of the court, he detailed his knowledge of the crime.

On the night of the murder he had slept at the top of the house, and, of the events supposed to have happened, heard nothing. He arose at his customary hour, 5.45, and went downstairs. As he did so he heard Mme. Steinheil calling him.

"I went into her room; she was tied—on the bed. I ran into master's room. I didn't see him, and ran back to Mme. Steinheil and untied her. Then I went for the doctor, after calling to Lecoq. Mme. Steinheil's voice was clear—a little weak and a little changed. The shutters were closed, but I didn't open them first. I untied her first."

"In what condition was the bed?" asked the President.

"The sheets were tumbled a little, but not much; they were not quite up to Madame's knees."

"Are you quite sure of this?" he was asked.

"Quite sure," he replied firmly.

His words were the prelude to a hot discussion, for it was in direct contrast to the evidence he had previously given to the police magistrate, when he had said that Mme. Steinheil was practically naked, that the sheets were pulled up to her neck.

"The feet were tied together and tied to the white bar at the foot of the bed. I undid her hands next; they were crossed on her stomach."

There was a fresh outburst, this time from the back of the court, for it was well known that Remy had originally given an entirely different account of how Mme. Steinheil was tied to the bed.

With Remy's evidence the situation seemed to change entirely. Up to now the evidence had, bit by bit, made it apparent that the accused was guilty of the crime of which

she was charged, but Remy's contradictory evidence put a different complexion on the case. If the chief witnesses for the prosecution were not to be relied upon, then nobody could feel any too sure that Mme. Steinheil, even though proved a liar again and again, was guilty of the double crime.

The more evidence Remy gave the more the defence were able to show the court that either the valet had lied to the police magistrate or that he was lying to the court, and when eventually Couillard stepped from the witness-box the defence had scored distinctly.

In fact, all that Saturday the evidence favoured the accused, for among those called for the prosecution were two brothers-in-law of Adolphe Steinheil, and their testimony was so acrimonious, so bitterly prejudiced, that instead of harming the accused with their wild, vengeful words, they actually created a feeling of sympathy toward the woman.

The trend of the case toward the belief in the innocence of Mme. Steinheil which commenced for the first time on the Saturday, continued on the Monday, when the case was resumed, and was emphasized by the most dramatic avowal of a police detective, Pousse.

Pousse gave his evidence, and when he had finished he paused, then suddenly he turned to the judge, and throwing out his right hand with a dramatic flourish toward the prisoner, exclaimed, in a ringing voice :

"I have always believed in her good faith. If she had said to me 'I am the guilty person,' I would not have believed her. I may be risking my livelihood by saying this, but I am saying it because I believe it. Mme. Steinheil acted no part, and I believe her."

It was not evidence, of course, but the effect was wonderful—even better than any real evidence could have possibly achieved. After his speech to the judge there was a momentary silence, one of complete astonishment, but the next moment a roar of applause broke out which the judge tried vainly to stem.

The joy of the defence can well be imagined. For one moment it was thought that Maître Aubin would speak, for he stood up, but almost at once he sat down again, realizing that he would perhaps spoil the most wonderful moment throughout the whole trial.

This was the climax of the day of sensations. Previous to this Mme. Blaise Antezio gave evidence which helped to confirm Mme. Steinheil's story of the murderers, while Dr. Peuch and Dr. Acheray spoke well of the accused.

Later a third doctor, Dr. Courtois-Suffit, during a long and technical examination, said: "The murderers must have been two or more; I am willing to stake my reputation on it," and in view of the fact that Dr. Suffit's reputation was a distinctly good one, his words had great weight with the jury.

By this time the attitude of Paris toward the "Red Widow" had certainly undergone a change. Up to now she had been considered guilty, and the betting on her conviction had been two to one, but after the evidence on Monday, the 8th of November, people discovered that not yet was there any real evidence either for or against the prisoner, and the odds on her guilt settled down to even money.

Only one thing was certain: every hour of the trial made the affair more and more mysterious, more and more complicated, until the case was wrapped in a fog of doubt, which the evidence the following day did not serve to dispel. Very little of it is worth relating, however, although there was one little interesting period of emotion when the jeweller, Souloy, who was responsible for Mme. Steinheil's arrest, said—referring to his conscience, which had made him reveal to the police that he had, for alteration, some of the jewellery which Couillard was supposed to have stolen:

"I wish my conscience had not spoken. I cannot regret Couillard's liberty, but I had, and have, a sincere affection for the prisoner, and shall always suffer for having been the unwilling means of her long sufferings."

At his words Mme. Steinheil cried, at which the witness followed suit and said something to the effect that he had two rings worth £6 each. Whatever the inference, a second later the judge, prisoner and lawyers were all shouting at one another until the court resembled the tower of Babel in miniature.

If nothing much happened on the Tuesday the same cannot be said of the Wednesday. A most sensational exposure of legal methods was made by M. Borderel.

After the lunch adjournment M. Borderel was called,

Right away he admitted, quite simply, that he loved Mme. Steinheil.

"Of the case itself I know absolutely nothing," he continued. "As soon as I heard of the murder I came straight up to Paris to do what I could for Mme. Steinheil, of whose deep distress I felt perfectly certain."

"Did you not," asked M. de Valles, "tell the examining magistrate that on one occasion, some time before the crime, Mme. Steinheil had alluded to her husband in terms of positive dislike, and said he was a dirty scoundrel?"

"*I did not*," replied M. Borderel. "I am particularly glad that you have mentioned this, because I wish to point out a disgraceful fact. When my evidence was given to me to sign I told M. André that I had never made use of that expression, and that no such expression had ever passed Mme. Steinheil's lips in my hearing. The examining magistrate refused to make the alteration I demanded in my deposition. He said it did not matter."

It did not matter! What an extraordinary revelation. Viewing the matter now, it seems preposterous that justice can still hold up its head in Paris if this is the way the laws of the country are conducted. Reference has already been made to the fact that M. André was apparently hostile to Mme. Steinheil, and surely it would seem that the inference was justified. That a magistrate could thus deliberately adjust the signed evidence of witnesses to his inclinations, and by so doing place the accused in a position wherein her life was at stake, is incredible, and yet if M. Borderel's evidence is to be believed, it seems that such was the case.

His evidence, however, slight though it may have been in essentials, created toward the accused more than a favourable impression on all in court, for his attitude of sincerity was so marked that it could not be doubted that M. André's tactics had not been all that might have been desired.

By Thursday, the 11th of November, eighty witnesses had been heard, and it was obvious that the trial was drawing to a conclusion, and after an adjournment, the Public Prosecutor, M. Trouard Riolli, began his speech for the prosecution, and in doing so created yet another sensation in court, for his first words were a warning to the jury to disregard anonymous letters and opinions which might be forced upon them.

The reason for this was that an anonymous letter had been sent to the private address of each jurymen informing him that M. Trouard Riolli owed his career to the late Felix Faure, and would thus have personal reasons for feeling hatred toward the prisoner.

What was the object in thus sending these letters is incomprehensible. Obviously it was not anyone who favoured the defendant, because such an action immediately created an impression—at any rate, to the outside world—that it was a trick of the defence, though a clumsy, obvious trick, and as such not worth considering, except as—as suggested—a means to cast more mud upon the unhappy Mme. Steinheil.

However, after this, he went right forward to the attack, and seeing that by French law he was allowed a latitude unthinkable in this country, he did not hesitate to create in the minds of the jury that Mme. Steinheil was an utterly immoral woman who was capable of committing any crime if it should be for her own benefit.

With regard to the question of strength, the prosecution urged that the accused was unduly strong for her age, and insinuated that the constant horseback riding in which, as a girl, she had indulged, had been the means of developing the muscles. M. Trouard Riolli frankly stated his disbelief in Mme. Steinheil's story of the masked men, and in support of his argument retold the story of the tax-collector of Montebeliard, and accused the defendant of imitating this method of camouflage. If further proof were wanted that the accused had planned the crime, it was in the fact that she had taken care that the dog Turc, usually left on guard, had only the day before been sent away, thus making certain that it should not bark and disturb the murderers in their nefarious task.

If his manners were uncouth, his voice rasping, and his methods irritating, the same could not be said of his clever reasoning. One by one he emphasized the points which told against the "Red Widow", interweaving his conclusions, interlocking the evidence until it seemed that nothing could save the verdict from being brought in as guilty.

One theory which he drove home to his listeners must be mentioned, for frankly he set aside any suggestion of Mme. Steinheil deliberately conspiring to commit matricide, and

suggested that, although Mme. Steinheil must have planned the crime herself, she could have carried it through only with help.

“So she found an accomplice near her—a man or a woman, a woman rather than a man perhaps.”

At this insinuation Mme. Steinheil sprang to her feet, crying out, “Whom do you mean?”

“We have no proof which of the two it was, and we have not arrested the accomplice. There was no intention to kill Mme. Japy, but she was killed by an accident. She wore false teeth, and the gag which was forced into her mouth choked her.”

His speech finished amid stormy scenes, and the session closed for a short adjournment, the President having previously announced that the verdict was to be given some time or other that night.

During the next two hours the intense excitement was sustained at fever heat. What was to be the verdict? Guilty of the double murder—guilty of being an accomplice only—or innocent? The general impression was that she would be brought in guilty of being an accomplice only, that she would be punished by a sentence of ten years’ imprisonment.

No one could keep still; everyone discussed the case, or else jumped nervously up and down in their seats, or wandered in and out of the benches.

At the end of two hours the court sat again, and Maître Aubin spoke for the defence. His speech was long and rather cumbersome, yet it was clever, and in places very much to the point. Time and time again he scored a winning shot, while now and then he relapsed into the dramatic or touched upon the heart chords of his audience by referring tenderly to the accused.

Yet in a sense his task was easy, his line of defence having been actually raised by the Attorney-General. If Mme. Steinheil were an accomplice, how could she in all justice be convicted alone of the crime? How could she, as suggested by the prosecution, be guilty of only one-half of the crime and yet pay the penalty of the whole? Such was his plea.

In due course the trial was at an end, and the jury retired to consider the verdict.

Whatever had been the excitement before, it was now doubled. The atmosphere of the court was nervous, almost hysterical. Several times the President was fetched to the jury to be consulted upon some point or other; each time there was a dramatic hush, and a subsequent outburst of discussion.

At last the jury returned; every eye was fixed upon them in an endeavour to discover beforehand the result of their deliberations, but their stolid faces betrayed no secrets.

The President re-entered, the court was hushed, the prisoner brought in. Then, in that deathly silence, the foreman of the jury was asked the vital question. Slowly he spoke—*not guilty on any count*.

The pandemonium which ensued beggars description. There was a tremendous outburst of enthusiastic cheering; it echoed and re-echoed in the court until the air rang with the tumultuous noise. It was in vain that the President banged with his mallet for silence. Strangers kissed each other; the prisoner cried and swooned, counsel cried; the jury embraced one another; lawyers who had previously pronounced their belief that Mme. Steinheil was guilty, shouted with joy—no theatre has ever resounded to such applause—and all because the chivalrous Frenchmen knew that a woman was not to suffer. Guilty or not guilty, her sufferings were at an end, so they cheered and laughed and cried!

There is little left to tell. Mme. Steinheil came to England and in later years became the wife of a British peer.* Marthe entered a convent, but eventually she too married, her husband being an Italian painter, a certain del Perugia, and the young couple spent many happy months with Mme. Steinheil at her home in England.

Despite the verdict of the jury there are still some who maintain that Mme. Steinheil was guilty of the double crime, yet there is every reason for heartily endorsing the kindly verdict, and so it would not come amiss to analyse a few of the points for and against the prosecution.

In the first place, the inference drawn by the violet-black ink is far from satisfactory. Granted the presence of ink-

* Mme. Steinheil's second husband died while this book was in the press.

marks on Mme. Steinheil's knee, and on her husband's finger; granted that the little drops of ink which dripped up to the bedside of Madame Japy were the result of falling from the hem of a skirt, surely, in all conscience, this cannot imply that Mme. Steinheil was the murderess. The same hands which killed Steinheil and passed on the ink-stains may have been the same pair which bound Mme. Steinheil to the bed. The article of dress which dripped the ink might just as easily have been a *cloak* as a skirt. Again, it is safe to assume that no trace of ink was found on the hem of any of Mme. Steinheil's clothes, otherwise the prosecution would have made a big point of this—possibly a scoring point.

One of Mme. Steinheil's strongest arguments in her defence was concerning the cloaks and hats said by her to be worn by the murderers. This point has been more or less glossed over, so that in all fairness to the accused it should be elaborated.

As already explained two cards were found, torn up in a Metro train. One was an invitation card, the other bore the names and addresses of a Mme. Mazeline, painter of repute, two wig-makers, and a M. Guilbert, theatrical costumier.

Investigations were made and Mme. Mazeline and the wig-makers asked if they could account for the card. None of these three could, but enquiries at M. Guilbert's office threw more light upon the mystery, and one of M. Guilbert's assistants, Mlle. Rallet, testified that among their customers was a Russian society which had its headquarters at the Eden Theatre (or the Hebiew Theatre), 133, rue St. Denis.

Among the costumes which had been loaned to this theatre just previous to the murder were five for Jewish priests, for a play entitled "Cain and Abel" (Sossier Cote 662), and that when she, Mlle. Rallet, on behalf of her employer, received them back again—after the murder—*four were missing, the large black cloak and three costumes of Jewish priests.*

The dossier of this case further reveal the facts, firstly, that it would have been simple for anyone to have stolen the costumes, and secondly, that they were never recovered.

Considering, then, that Mme. Steinheil told the story of the cloaked murderers on the morning of the 31st May, and that

the costumes were only taken to the Eden Theatre on the morning of the 30th of May, and that the theft of them was not discovered until the 3rd of June, it must prove that Mme. Steinheil could not have learned of their loss previous to the night of the murder and thus invented the story—denounced as nonsense—of the cloaked criminals.

The story of the letter shut into Remy Couillard's valise is as follows : The reporters went, in the first place, to Mme. Steinheil, and proved to the unhappy woman that Remy Couillard was not all that he represented himself to be, and suggested seeing his identity card. For this reason Mme. Steinheil, Monsieur Dubot, Marthe and Mariette examined Couillard's pocket-book, and in this way discovered a letter which Marthe recognized as having written to her fiancé on the eve of All Saints' Day.

According to the dossier (Cote 43), Couillard subsequently confessed to the letter, though it seems it was more forgetfulness on his part than any criminal act, for having been asked to post it he placed it in his book, and from that time until it was found, forgot all about it.

It was, in conjunction with other circumstances, the discovery of this letter which led Mme. Steinheil into committing what must be admitted a dastardly action, namely, that of slipping the pearls into the valet's bag in order to implicate him in the greater crime. Nevertheless it must be remembered that during all these months Mme. Steinheil was so wrought up to a pitch of hysterical excitement that she was scarcely responsible for her actions ; added to this she received such a shoal of anonymous letters, many of them accusing Couillard as the murderer, that she hypnotized herself into this belief, and, according to herself, "planted" the pearls upon him to frighten him into confessing knowledge of the murder.

The scandal of the alleged confession by Mme. Steinheil extracted from her by enterprising journalists was not sufficiently emphasized. Previous to the time when Mme. Steinheil, in an endeavour to prove her innocence, re-entered the public limelight, she suffered a tremendous mental pressure. Conscious that people were mutely watching her with accusing eyes, fatigued by the constant interviews with journalists, with counsel, with the *juge d'instruction*, Mme.

Steinheil was gradually worked up to a pitch of hysteria, and it must be acknowledged that there was nothing extraordinary in the fact.

Very early on the morning of the 25th of November, 1908, journalists besieged the house, to be followed by workmen, and later by detectives. Then came H. Hamard with a message that M. Leydet wished to see her. So tired and fatigued was she that even during that journey she fell asleep.

After the interview, a trying one in the extreme, she returned home to find two journalists awaiting her. They questioned her, but later left her—presumably in peace—but not for long. At nine o'clock M. Barby of the *Matin*, M. Hutin of the *Echo de Paris*, and M. de Labruyère arrived. Using methods which smack more of the celebrated fifth degree of the U.S. detective force, these three newspaper men bullied Mme. Steinheil until her head whirled. Speaking in angry words they accused her of the crime, suggested that her defence was a fable, and ordered her to tell the truth.

In piteous tones she pleaded with them to go, informing them she was weary, that she had not slept for many nights. Instead, they laughed at her troubles and began again. She was guilty, her lover was being arrested, her brother, her daughter—everyone was being imprisoned. Her house was being surrounded by a mob of lynchers—they would set fire to it! Only they could save her—she must confess!

It became a sing-song; she heard them speaking, but apparently from a distance; dizzily she could see them, but only through the maze of sleep which was pressing down upon her brain. The torture became unbearable; hysteria gained the upper hand. At last, when she could stand it no longer, she gasped out a string of names—accomplices who had helped her—anything they wanted, that she could rest!

It was this confession which was responsible for Mme. Steinheil being arrested and lodged in the St. Lazare Prison.

The prosecution had hoped to make a big point of the cotton-wool gag, but the defence made light of the insinuation. Here, for instance, is the admirable reasoning of Maître Antony Aubin as delivered at the trial:

“In order to demonstrate that Mme. Steinheil was never gagged at all and that she lies, this is the argument used: There never was in Madame Steinheil’s room but one piece

of cotton-wool that might have been a gag, the piece that was on the pillow, on the right side of it. Now this gag was at once put under seal, on the spot, without any possible mistake. Handed later on to Dr. Balthazard, he found that it had never been wetted with saliva; therefore the 'gag' on the pillow had never been in Mme. Steinheil's mouth.

"But an important question now arises. How many pieces of cotton-wool were placed under the seal on the Sunday morning, May 31st? Four. There was cotton-wool everywhere, so much so that someone present remarked: 'One seems to walk on cotton-wool!'

"Seal number one containing the gag '*which the criminals forced into Mme. Steinheil's mouth*', for those were the words written on the label attached to it—was put together without it being known by whom it (the gag) was picked up, who handed it to the Police Commissary, without its identity being ascertained if only by a question of Mme. Steinheil. No precaution was taken, there was no supervision—so that it is impossible to say whether the piece of cotton-wool placed under the seal as 'having been forced into Mme. Steinheil's mouth', is really the one which had been seen on her pillow, and which she herself pointed out.

"To demonstrate that the piece of cotton-wool from the pillow and the one examined by Dr. Balthazard are not the same one is easy enough.

"The gag—which was seen by one or two witnesses near the pillow and the one examined by three or four other witnesses in various places, on the floor, on a chiffonier, on a small table—wanders about. But how can one wonder that, in the excitement which upset everybody—and everything—some mistake as to all those pieces of cotton-wool occurred?

"There is another point. In what terms do the witnesses describe the wandering gag? As a gag made of one single piece (pear-shaped) as big as a fist. If, then, the one examined by the expert contains one single piece and answers to the description given, one will be able to admit that this gag, pear-shaped and in one piece, is really the piece of wadding found on the pillow. But Doctor Balthazard himself described the piece of cotton-wool he examined as follows: 'This gag is made of two pieces, one rectangular, the other triangular and almost equilateral.'

"How disastrous for the prosecution. . . . Besides, gentlemen, if the whole thing had been a sham, Mme. Steinheil, knowing of course the difference in appearance between dry cotton-wool and moistened cotton-wool, would not have failed to wet it, if only for a few seconds, especially as it was she who drew attention to the gag!"

The defence was quite right in stressing the point of the dog, Turc. The suggestion of the prosecution was that Mme. Steinheil had sent away the dog so that there would have been no possibility of it barking and thus disturbing her victims during the execution of her nefarious designs, but, as Maître Aubin pointed out, what a useless action that would have been, for, with the drugging of M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy proved (which it was not), there was no possibility of either of them being awakened by any noise whatsoever.

The defence might have continued; have shown that the dog would have been a mute witness for the defence. It would have been easy for Mme. Steinheil to have supplied herself with a handful of stones, and by throwing them from her window, disturbed the dog sufficiently to have caused it to bark consistently and thus have had the neighbours aware that intruders were apparently about. This would have confirmed Mme. Steinheil's story of the cloaked murderers.

It will be seen, therefore, from the foregoing, that all the circumstances were such that there can be little foundation for a plea that there was a miscarriage of justice. There was no proof that Mme. Steinheil was guilty of the double murder, and the jury only confirmed the findings of analytical common sense.

At the same time, however, there are still one or two puzzling circumstances which will probably never be cleared up. What was the motive of the cloaked robbers in murdering Mme. Japy and M. Steinheil? Supposing they had entered the house for the purpose of robbery. Having tied up and gagged the three sleepers, they could have ransacked the house without any fear of interruption or alarm; why, therefore, murder Mme. Japy and M. Steinheil and, having murdered two people, why did they hesitate to stifle the third, "one who", in the words of the *juge d'instruction*, "would be more formidable, more implacable and relentless because the victims were her own mother and husband?"

They were evidently careless in omitting to regard the precept which says that dead men tell no tales.

On the other hand, despite the insinuations of the prosecution, there was an equal lack of motive on the part of Mme. Steinheil to murder her mother and husband. Supposing she had planned the crime ; what a senseless method to choose ! She must have known she would have become involved ; even an archangel would under such circumstances. In which case what a small chance there would be subsequently of marrying her lover.

Again, why should she have wished to dispose of one husband to collect another ? She was quite agreeably situated for her *affaires*. She had a villa (paid for by her male friends) and a complacent husband behind whom to shelter (one who was also, as a painter, an excuse to receive visitors).

How different would have been her life with her new husband ? Aware of her intrigues through having been the leading light in one of them, there would have been no "complacency". He would most surely have been jealous, have kept a sharp eye upon his wife. No, had Mme. Steinheil planned the crime it was indeed bad policy on her part.

Finally, why should she—had she been guilty—have awakened the sleeping dogs of the law ? After the first sensation the affair had blown over, died a natural death. She would have been mad, positively insane, to have insisted upon investigations had she possessed any other than a clear conscience, especially in face of the fact that she knew beforehand that a certain suspicion was already attached to her name.

As has already been pointed out time and time again, there was no apparent motive for the double murder, yet if there is no motive, there is at least a possible explanation—however nebulous—one which seems to have been absolutely overlooked and never suggested by either prosecution or defence.

On the night of the murder Paris was suffering in the throes of a ghastly heat-wave, one which had lasted many days, and so intense was it that it affected the brains of many people. Among other minor calamities for which the heat-wave was responsible was an extraordinary number of crimes,

all of them motiveless : during three days ending 2nd June—which, of course, included the fatal night of the Steinheil murder—thirteen crimes were reported in Paris alone, and apart from the possible bearing they have on this case, they are well worth relating from the interesting point of view as to what effect excessive heat has upon the human brain.

The first crime brought to the notice of the police was that of the death of a wine merchant. Two customers had entered his *estaminet* for a much-needed drink ; they ordered wine. When they tasted it it was sour. Forthwith they seized a knife apiece and proceeded to carve the patron to death—surely a petty enough provocation in all conscience.

The next case was that of a rag-picker. The heat touched his brain. He went mad and half-killed a woman, whereupon the victim's brother seized a revolver and shot the rag-picker dead on the spot.

In a certain hotel one of the visitors rang for a servant. A *garçon* went up to him, and because the occupant of the room was not pleased with the arrangement of the furniture he seized a chair, and attacking the servant, battered him to death.

In the Montmartre quarter an apache, for no reason whatsoever, pulled out a knife from his clothes and promptly stabbed two women. A gendarme, seeing this, went to arrest the man, whereupon the apache next produced a revolver and, firing at the gendarme, wounded him so badly that the officer had to be taken to hospital.

In another quarter rag-pickers were again featured. Two of them quarrelled, came to blows, and fought until one, tiring of fisticuffs, plucked a revolver from his pocket, shot the other man dead, and effectively put an end to the fight.

Not far off a father and mother who were accused of not caring sufficiently well for their child were lynched by a furious crowd and the man nearly killed. A large body of police were rushed to the rescue, and in the *fracas* which followed six gendarmes were injured.

In a main street, and in broad daylight, a cab-driver was garrotted, robbed, and left for dead.

There were four suicides : one that of a soldier who departed this life because his leave was at an end ; another was that of a man of fifty-three years of age who killed

himself because he lost his job—and for him one feels more sympathy. In a third case a woman shot herself dead owing to the fact that her fiancé broke off their engagement.

The fourth suicide was that of a young German painter named Wiezels. On the Sunday he endeavoured to shoot himself because of the heat, but the revolver misfired so that he had, perforce, to live for the rest of the day, but the following day he hanged himself in his studio, situated in the Latin quarter. A friend, inconveniently passing, called in and proceeded to cut the rope, and by so doing saved the life of the artist.

Repenting of his rashness the German spent a happy evening in Montmartre giving a dinner and distributing to his friends for luck bits of the rope which had nearly ended his life. However, he must have purchased another rope, for on the Tuesday he hanged himself from the same nail as he had used the day before, and as perseverance usually earns its reward, this time the painter succeeded in entering the halls of Valhalla.

In view of the long rôle of murders and suicides enumerated above, is it too far-fetched to suggest that Mme. Steinheil did not exaggerate in her story of the masked burglars ; that they entered the house for the purpose of robbery only, then—and it has been seen that this had happened many times during these three days—suddenly they were seized with a blood-lust, and without further ado butchered the unfortunate husband and mother of Mme. Steinheil ?

THE END

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